

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2016

Vol. 121, No. 9

₹ 15.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

## *Analysis of Vedanta Philosophy III*

Whatever you see, or feel, or hear, as air, earth, or anything, is material—the product of Akasha. It goes on and becomes finer and finer, or grosser and grosser, changing under the action of Prana. Like Akasha, Prana is omnipresent, and interpenetrating everything. Akasha is like the water, and everything else in the universe is like blocks of ice, made out of that water, and floating in the water, and Prana is the power that changes this Akasha into all these various forms. The gross body is the instrument made out of Akasha, for the manifestation of Prana in gross forms, as muscular motion, or walking, sitting, talking, and so forth. That fine body is also made of Akasha, a very fine form of Akasha, for the manifestation of the same Prana in the finer form of thought. So, first there is this gross body. Beyond that is this fine body, and beyond that is the Jiva, the real man. Just as the nails can be pared off many times and yet are still part of our bodies, not different, so is our gross body related to the fine. It is not that a man has a fine and also a gross body; it is the one body only, the part which endures longer is the fine body, and that which dissolves sooner is the gross. Just as I can cut this nail any number of times, so, millions of times I can shed this gross body, but the fine body will remain. According to the dualists, this Jiva or the real man is very fine, minute. So far we see that man is a being, who has first a



gross body which dissolves very quickly, then a fine body which remains through aeons, and then a Jiva. This Jiva, according to the Vedanta philosophy, is eternal, just as God is eternal. Nature is also eternal, but changefully eternal. The material of nature—Prana and Akasha—is eternal, but it is changing into different forms eternally. But the Jiva is not manufactured either of Akasha or Prana; it is immaterial and therefore will remain for ever. It is not the result of any combination of Prana and Akasha, and whatever is not the result of combination, will never be destroyed because destruction is going back to the cause. The gross body is a compound of Akasha and Prana, and therefore, will be decomposed. The fine body will also be decomposed, after a long time, but the Jiva is simple, and will never be destroyed. It was never born for the same reason—nothing simple can be born; the same argument applies. That which is a compound only can be born.

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From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2015), 1.395-97.



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EDITORIAL OFFICE  
Prabuddha Bharata  
Advaita Ashrama  
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat  
Dt Champawat · 262 524  
Uttarakhand, India  
Tel: 91 · 96909 98179  
prabuddhabharata@gmail.com  
pb@advaitaashrama.org

Printed and Published by  
*Swami Vibhatmananda*

PUBLICATION OFFICE  
Advaita Ashrama  
5 Dehi Entally Road  
Kolkata · 700 014  
West Bengal, India  
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2289 0898  
2284 0210 / 2286 6450 / 6483  
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INTERNET EDITION  
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## Contents

Traditional Wisdom	631
This Month	632
<i>Editorial: Losing Individuality</i>	633
The Divinity of the Self in Indian and Western Qualified Non-dualistic Thought <i>Gopal Stavig</i>	635
Vedanta and Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Indian Poetry <i>Subhasis Chattopadhyay</i>	648
Mandukya Upanishad <i>Swami Ranganathananda</i>	656
Vedanta Answers <i>Swami Smaranananda</i>	664
The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life <i>Swami Nityasthananda</i>	666
Traditional Tales: The Heart of Acharya Ramanuja	668
Reviews	670
Manana	675
Reports	677

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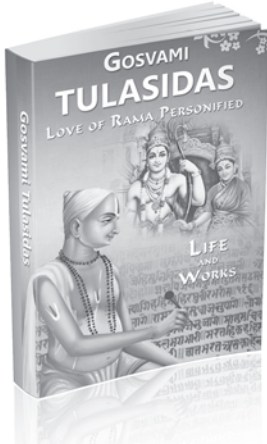


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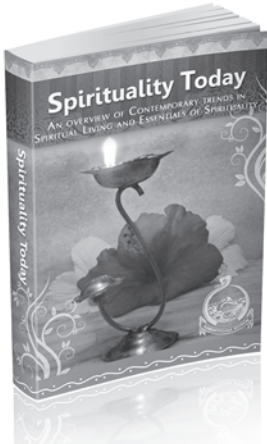
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**Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!**

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

September 2016  
Vol. 121, No. 9

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अस्ति ब्रह्मेति ब्रह्मविद्याविदब्रवीद् ब्रह्मद्वारमिदमित्येवैतदाह यस्तपसापहतपाप्मा ॐ ब्रह्मणो महिमेत्ये-  
वैतदाह यः सुयुक्तोऽजस्रं चिन्तयति तस्माद्विद्यया तपसा चिन्तया चोपलभ्यते ब्रह्म । स ब्रह्मणः पर  
एता भवत्यधिदैवत्वं देवेभ्यश्चेत्यक्षय्यमपरिमितमनामयं सुखमश्नुते य एवंविद्वाननेन त्रिकेण ब्रह्मोपास्ते ।  
अथ यैः परिपूर्णोऽभिभूतोऽयं रथितश्च तैर्वैव मुक्तस्त्वात्मन्नेव सायोज्यमुपैति ॥४.४॥

*Asti brahmeti brahmavidyavid-abravīt brahma-dvaram-idam-ity-evaitad-aha yas-tapasa-  
apahata-papma om brahmano mahimety-evaitad aha yah suyukto'jasram chintayati tasmad-  
vidyaya tapasa chintaya chopalabhyate brahma. Sa brahmanah para eta bhavaty-adhidaivatvam  
devebhyaśh-cheti-akshayyam-aparimitam-anamayam sukham-ashnute ya evam-vidvan-anena  
trikena brahmopaste. Atha yaiḥ paripurno'bhibhūto'yaṁ rathitaśh-cha tair-vaiva muktas-tv-  
atmann-eva sayojyam-upaiti.* (4.4)

‘Brahman is,’ said a knower of Brahman. ‘This is the door to Brahman,’ said one, who had freed oneself from evil by practising austerities. ‘Om is Brahman’s greatness,’ said one who, completely absorbed in meditation, constantly contemplates on Om. Therefore, Brahman is realised by knowledge, austerity, and contemplation. One who knows and meditates on Brahman thus, through this triad of knowledge, austerity, and contemplation, transcends Hiranyagarbha and attains the supreme divinity, above all gods; and attains unending, unlimited, happiness with no misery. Then, freed from things that completely overwhelmed and deluded it, this embodied self attains complete union with the Atman. (4.4)



# THIS MONTH

**W**HAT IS INDIVIDUALITY and individualism? How important are these for our lives? How do they affect our spiritual lives? These aspects are discussed in **Losing Individuality**.

Though qualified non-dualism originated in India, this thought current can be seen to have existed across the world in the teachings of various philosophers. Tracing these developments helps us to understand how there is a cord of unity among the apparently different philosophical schools worldwide. Gopal Stavig, a researcher from Hollywood, who has authored the book *Western Admirers of Ramakrishna And His Disciples* attempts such a daunting task in **The Divinity of the Self in Indian and Western Qualified Non-dualistic Thought**. He finds different stages of the development of this thought among Western thinkers starting from the scholars of Alexandria and also includes the ideas of quantum physicists that echo this qualified non-dualism propounded by Acharya Ramanuja.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay, an Assistant Professor of English at Ramananda College, Bishnupur; a Biblical Theology scholar; and a trained psychoanalyst, explains the presence of and the need for **Vedanta and Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Indian Poetry**.

Giving up *samsara* or attachments is essential to understand our true nature. In the eighth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Sri-mat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna

Math and Ramakrishna Mission, this point is emphasised and illustrations are given from various texts like the *Vivekachudamani* and the *Uddhava Gita* to explain how we have to give up desires and attachments and how we can learn such detachment from natural phenomena and also living beings in the world just like the Avadhuta, who had twenty-four gurus.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by young and old alike, over a period of time. The fifth instalment of the collection of such questions and his answers to them is given in **Vedanta Answers**.

How the ego makes one dance to its tunes and how obsession with one's faults can be detrimental to spiritual life are discussed in the sixth instalment of **The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life** by Swami Nityasthananda, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru.

**The Heart of Acharya Ramanuja** is the first instalment of the story of the transformation of a young man and woman by the guidance of Acharya Ramanuja, into a very devout devotee-couple. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

In **A None's Story**, Corinna Nicolaou, a popular author and a person with no religious affiliation, recounts her journey through some major religions to understand them. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.



# *Losing Individuality*

**H**UMAN BEINGS have distinct personalities. The extent of the pronounced differences from person to person, even in minor details of behaviour, is something the human being has evolved into. Every person is a class unto oneself though belonging to a bigger community, and the still bigger species of humans. Consequently, human education involves the honing and emphasising of these specific traits of a person. While group behaviour is considered vital, humans consider the development of individual traits to be synonymous with culture. Even the screen of one's mobile phone is styled according to one's very particular, and oftentimes, peculiar preferences.

Most animal life is characterised by group or herd behaviour. We humans have apparently outgrown the need for a herd mentality. Or have we? Humans are caught in a tug-of-war between the need for individual enclosure and social bonding at the same time. Introversion and a cloistered life often inspire creation. They could also be neglected symptoms of mental ill health. Every person has a specific idea of the collective and individual life. When the value systems of the individual life are much divorced from those of the collective life, one experiences inner conflict. Such conflicts may subside by temporary periods of introversion or by one's gradually becoming insensitive to the conflicts. If creating a defined individuality is a sign of the evolution of the human being, why does it create conflicts? Probably because individualisation of the human being is a failed attempt to make up for the ignorance about one's true nature.

Unknown and inexplicable things or phenomena are often given euphemistic names like individualism. Therefore, if a person has to sincerely seek the knowledge of one's true nature, she or he should give up the cosy enclosure of individuality.

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**The greatness of the human being lies not in its obsession to become distinct or separate, but in its innate pull to converge with the universe and merge with the Real.**

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Partly the problem with the notion of individuality is that it is a mistaken notion. Instead of seeing oneself as identical with the Real, we generally see ourselves as limited in space and time. Often the words 'identity' and 'individuality' are used synonymously. But, they are not synonymous. Individuality necessarily presupposes distinction. Identity, on the other hand, could be that of oneness with the whole. Individuality can be another term for our constant penchant with distancing ourselves from the collective. We are so obsessed with attempts to individualise our lives that we cannot see anyone or anything as other than a set of limiting or demarcating features. For instance, when we get to know a person for the first time, we mentally catalogue a list of qualities that belong to that person. Introduction to a person thus becomes a pigeonholing process. Many social scientists today argue that in the wake of the mushrooming of social networking websites, people have started losing individuality. Here again, individuality is used to mean identity as well as the distinct attributes of a person.

Technology or social networking websites have only accentuated that which human beings possessed much before—the need for being separate and distinct. Individualism is a thought that is considered to be a sign of enlightenment. This philosophy advocates that people think out of the box and have the courage to go against traditional paths. This school of thinking was also born out of notions of individuality. There is apparently no problem with harbouring ideas of individuality till one has to extend one's help or broaden one's identification, say with one's family or society. Then it becomes difficult to accommodate or even understand the viewpoints of others, particularly those that go against one's beliefs.

Cultural and religious disharmony is caused due to these strange ideas of uniqueness called individualism. It brings in us a streak of impatience that does not allow deep listening to others. Self-abnegation is an important goal of all faith-traditions and that can be achieved only by opening oneself to interactions with different belief systems. It also truly leads one to greatness by becoming part of a greater collective. Even the mental strength of such a person increases manifold.

Contemporary society gives one the tools to be completely cut-off from the world, though depending on the efforts of almost the rest of the world for sustenance. For instance, one can shut oneself in a house, have sources of income through investments managed through the Internet, can buy supplies from the Internet, and get practically everything else through the Internet, while not contributing anything to society, apart from being an unwilling part of the economic chain. The very possibility of such a life shows how individuality can quickly turn into outright selfishness. This further translates into discord and an unwillingness to live harmoniously, giving importance only to one's world view.

An individualistic approach to life also comes

in the way of the spirit of learning. When one is intent on maintaining one's distinctions and goes out of the way to appear as unique and different from others, it is difficult or well-nigh impossible to have a deep understanding of others' wisdom. One then lives in the bleak confidence that there is nothing more to know in this universe and that one's intellect has the solution to all problems. When life brings its share of misery upon such a person with pronounced individualistic tendencies, an irreversible psychological trauma and shattering of oneself is the result.

In spiritual life, particularly in the practice of Advaita Vedanta, individuality in this sense is a great stumbling block. When a person identifies oneself as having individuality in the sense of particular traits in space and time, any practice that requires the aspirant to give up notions of the body and the mind lead to a frightening scenario, where the clueless practitioner is afraid of being pulled into the dark depths of uncertainty. The first question that crops up in the mind of the aspirant is: 'What will become of my individuality?' But, the idea of individuality that people normally possess is transient anyway, with all the ideas of one's personality changing by the minute. True individuality is a doubtless understanding of one's personality. This has been called God, Reality, Truth, and by many other names. Unless one is definitely clear about individuality in this sense, one cannot even begin to be unique.

The greatness of the human being lies not in its obsession to become distinct or separate, but in its innate pull to converge with the universe. It is a great faculty of the human species that it has striven across millennia to lose its limited individualistic notions of itself and merge with the Real. Petty ideas about oneself only increase our suffering. It is only by developing an all-encompassing conception of our personality that we truly become unique.



# ***The Divinity of the Self in Indian and Western Qualified Non-dualistic Thought***

**Gopal Stavig**

**S**WAMI VIVEKANANDA ASKED: What is the soul of man? There was one party who held that there is a Being, God, and an infinite number of souls besides, who are eternally separate from God in essence, and form, and everything. This is dualism. ... The answer given by another party was that the soul was a part of the infinite Divine Existence. Just as this body is a little world by itself, and behind it is the mind or thought, and behind that is the individual soul, similarly, the whole world is a body, and behind that is the universal mind, and behind that is the universal Soul. Just as this body is a portion of the universal body, so this mind is a portion of the universal mind, and the soul of man a portion of the universal Soul. This is what is called the Vishishtādvaita, qualified monism.<sup>1</sup>

In the article ‘The Atman in the History of Western Thought’<sup>2</sup> the divinity of the Self is explained in detail from a non-dualistic standpoint. Here the divinity of the Self will be discussed from the qualified non-dualist perspective. While the traditional term used is ‘Soul’, some modern thinkers might prefer the word ‘Self’. It is important to realise that the divinity of the Self manifests at the non-dualistic, qualified non-dualistic, and theistic levels. Consequently, we have three parallel explanations. Other examples of parallel explanations include the Upanishads having been interpreted from each of these three standpoints by Acharya Shankara, Acharya Ramanuja, and Acharya Madhva respectively. God’s infinity and eternity have been explained as transcending

space and time non-dualistically, or as encompassing infinite space and time, dualistically or theistically. Each interpretation is valid from a particular perspective or level of discourse. Following the principle of complementarity, all of the aspects of Reality cannot be conceptually conceived of at the same time. Consequently, each theory separately accounts for some but not all of the aspects of Reality. Most importantly, while the Atman and divinity of the Self is central to Hinduism and Vedanta, particularly in the writings of Swami Vivekananda; this is a peripheral idea in Western thought. While some great Western thinkers have taught these ideas, they have been to a large extent overlooked and ignored in modern thought.

## ***The Self as a Fragment of Divinity***

From the standpoint of qualified non-dualism, the self is a part, reflection, and/or projection and emanation of divinity. According to Shankara (788–820) from one standpoint, all beings are part of the universal: causal body-spirit, Ishvara; subtle body-mind, Hiranyagarbha; and physical body, Virat. Ishvara as the universal Spirit is the unity of all individual causal bodies. Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic mind, is the unity of all individual subtle bodies in the mental world. ‘All the individual beings delimited by their senses become united in Hiranyagarbha, inhabiting the world of Brahman and identifying Himself with the totality of organs.’<sup>3</sup> Virat is the macrocosm, the unity of all physical bodies and material particles.<sup>4</sup>

Ramanuja (1017–1137), the greatest qualified non-dualist, was of the conviction that the individual soul is a part (amsha) of the highest Self; as the light issuing from a luminous thing such as fire or the sun is part of that body ... the highest Self is not of the same nature as the individual soul. For as the luminous body is of a nature different from that of its light, thus the highest Self differs from the individual soul which is a part of it. ... That the world and Brahman stand to each other in the relation of part and whole, the former being like the light and the latter like the luminous body, or the former being like the power and the latter like that in which the power inheres the former being like the body and the latter like the soul.<sup>5</sup>

Human bodies are each a part of God's universal body. "The fact that the scriptures proclaim "that the entire world forms the body of Brahman", shows that they teach the plurality of the world, though differing from him in character, is completely dependent on Him and stands to Him in the relation of mode (prakara). ... Intelligent and non-intelligent beings are thus mere modes of the highest Brahman, and have reality thereby only."<sup>6</sup>

The highest Self, which in Itself is of the nature of unlimited knowledge and bliss, has for Its body all sentient and non-sentient beings ... While the highest Self thus undergoes a change—in the form of a world comprising the whole aggregate of sentient and non-sentient beings—all imperfection and suffering are limited to the sentient beings constituting part of its body, and all change is restricted to non-sentient things which constitute another part. The highest Self ... being their inner Ruler and Self, it is in no way touched by their imperfections and changes. ... As the meditating individual soul is the Self of its own body, so the highest Brahman is the Self of the individual soul ... "He who dwelling within the Self is different from the Self, whom the Self does not know, of whom the Self is the body, who rules the Self from within, He is thy Self, the inner ruler, the immortal one"<sup>7</sup> ... all

sentient and insentient beings spring from Brahman, are merged in Him, breathe through Him, are ruled by Him, constitute His body.<sup>8</sup>

Swamiji discerned:

Ishwara is the sum total of individuals; yet He Himself also is an individual in the same way as the human body is a unit, of which each cell is an individual. Samashti or the Collective is God. Vyashti or the component is the soul or Jiva. The existence of Ishwara, therefore, depends on that of Jiva, as the body on the cell, and vice versa. Jiva, and Ishwara are co-existent beings. As long as the one exists, the other also must.<sup>9</sup>

In the long run, mind is begetting all force, and that is what is meant by the universal mind, the sum total of all minds. Everyone is creating, and [in] the sum total of all these creations you have the universe—unity in diversity. It is one and it is many at the same time.

The Personal God is only the sum total of all, and yet it is an individual by itself, just as you are the individual body of which each cell is an individual part itself.

Everything that has motion is included in Prana or force. [It is] this Prana which is moving the stars, sun, moon; Prana is gravitation. ...

All forces of nature, therefore, must be created by the universal mind. And we, as little bits of mind, [are] taking out that Prana from nature, working it out again in our own nature, moving our bodies and manufacturing our thought (1.506).

This shows that there is a continuity of mind, as the Yogis call it. The mind is universal. Your mind, my mind, all these little minds, are fragments of that universal mind, little waves in the ocean; and on account of this continuity, we can convey our thoughts directly to one another (2.13).

S Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) mentioned that for Acharya Ramanuja the human soul and matter are related to Brahman 'as attributes to a substance, as parts to a whole, or a body to the



soul'.<sup>10</sup> Other relations include light rays to the sun, a web to the spider from which it arose, as mental and physical objects projected or externalised by the inner self, or as modes.

This is a type of objective idealism that reduces existence to mind and thought. But our mind is only a small fragment of the universal mind, which to some extent exists apart from us in a super-sensory realm. Gross physical matter exists independent of us and our perceptions, but it is derived from mind and thought. One must remember that the mind has a substantial existence being composed of subtle matter and energy. By contrast, subjective idealists believe objects exist only when perceived, and to be is to be perceived.

A Jewish thinker Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) emphasised: 'Every man, in respect of his mind, is intimately related to the Divine Logos, being an imprint or fragment or effulgence of that blessed nature, but in the constitution of the body he is related to the entire world, for he is a blend of the same things, earth, water, air, and fire.' How can the tiny human mind

contain such an immense magnitude of sky and universe, had it not been an inseparable portion of that Divine and blessed soul? For nothing is severed or detached from the Divine, but only extended. ... Reasoning is a short word, but a most perfect and most Divine activity, a fragment of the soul [mind, intellect] of the universe, or a more perfect way of putting it for those following the philosophy of Moses, a close imprint of the Divine image.<sup>11</sup>

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164), who according to tradition travelled to India, taught: 'The soul of every man is "lonely" because it is separated during its union with the human body, from the Universal Soul, into which it is again received when it departs from its earthly companion.'<sup>12</sup>

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1327) reasoned: 'As

long as I am this or that, or have this or that, I am not all things and I have not all things. Become pure till you neither are nor have either this or that; then you are omnipresent and, being neither this nor that, are all things.'<sup>13</sup>

According to the teachings of Benedict Spinoza (1632–77), the Dutch Jewish philosopher—as expressed by Harry Wolfson:

After the model of the emanationist philosophy there is a Universal Soul which he calls the infinite Intellect of God; and of that soul the human soul is, as he has said, a part and that part of the infinite Intellect of God is certainly not annihilated with the death of man: it is reabsorbed in the source whence it came. For with his denial of creation out of nothing, Spinoza also denied the destruction of anything into nothing. ... For in his own philosophy there is a Universal Body as there is a Universal Soul, and both are inseparably united, and of that Universal Body the individual human body is a part, and, upon the death of man, just as his soul is reabsorbed in the Universal Soul, so is his body reabsorbed in the Universal Body. ...

There is a Universal Soul, of which the soul of every individual human being is an undifferentiated portion and that whatever individuality it displays during its existence in the body is owing to its contact with that body. ... This distinctness and individuality, by the eternal order of nature, is retained by the soul even after it departs from the body. It is as an individualized soul that it returns to its native source, the Universal Soul. It is not reabsorbed by it; it only finds shelter in it.<sup>14</sup>

In Spinoza's words: 'The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the human body, but something of it remains which is eternal.' There is only one substance, which has infinite attributes.

Particular things are nothing else than modifications of attributes of God, or modes by which attributes of God are expressed in a certain and determined manner.<sup>15</sup>

The human mind is a part of the infinite Intellect of God, and thus when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we say nothing else than that God, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, or in so far as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea (2.11).

Spinoza reasoned out that since ‘the infinite Intellect of God ... constitutes the essence of the human mind, when the human mind perceives this or that [God] has this or that idea.’ This raises the question, if one hundred people perceive and interpret a single event, does God discriminate, perceive, and interpret it correctly, or following the principle of plenitude, does God perceive and interpret the event in all possible ways both correctly and incorrectly?

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) in his essay ‘The Over-Soul’ writes:

That unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, of which all sincere conversation is the worship ... We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the Soul of the Whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the Whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the Soul. ... All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the

will; is the background of our being, in which they lie—an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love. ... [The Soul] passes onto and becomes that man who it enlightens ... it takes him to itself.<sup>16</sup>

The ideas of the British philosopher Alfred Edward Taylor (1869–1945) can be used to explain the relationship between God as the universal cosmic mind and the individual self:

Reality, we have seen, is to be thought of as a systematic whole forming a single individual experience, which is composed of elements or constituents, which are in their turn individual experiences. In each of these constituents the nature of the whole system manifests itself in a special way. Each of them contributes its own peculiar content to the whole system, and as the suppression or change of any one of them would alter the character of the whole, so it is the nature of the whole which determines the character of each of its constituents. In this way the whole and its constituent members are in complete interpenetration and form a perfect systematic unity. In the happy phrase of Leibnitz, we may say that each of the partial experiences reflects the whole system from its own peculiar ‘point of view’... In a systematic unity, we must remember, the whole can exist only in so far as it expresses its nature in the system of its parts, and again the parts can have no being except as the whole expresses itself through

them. ... If our conviction that Reality is a single systematic unity pervading and manifesting itself in lesser systematic unities is correct, we shall expect to find that some of the lesser systematic unities with which we have to deal in practical life and in the various sciences exhibit more of the full character of the whole to which they belong than others ... Though the whole, in a genuine system, must be present as a whole in every part, it need not be equally present in all ... it does not follow that all manifest the structure of that whole with equal adequacy and fullness ... the nature of the whole system of Reality is exhibited with infinitely greater adequacy and clearness in the working of the conscious mind than in the changes of configuration of the system of mass-particles or even the vital processes of the physical organism.<sup>17</sup>

Timothy Sprigge (1932–2007) of the University of Edinburgh, writes of the two approaches of monistic metaphysicians:

The first speak primarily of the way in which all individual finite centres of experience are aspects of a total all-embracing cosmic unity of experience whose filling they constitute, though It experiences them in a unity not graspable by these parts themselves. We might call this many-in-one or all-in-one monism [employed by F H Bradley and Sprigge]. The second speak primarily of there being a single subject of experience, or perhaps a pure essence of consciousness, which looks out at, or feels the world from, the situation of every single finite subject in each of which it is thought of as being equally and wholly present. We might call this one-in-many or one-in-all monism [utilised by B Spinoza, A Schopenhauer, and E Schrodinger].<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Self as a Projection and Emanation of Divinity***

Swamiji clarified: ‘No one will be lost. We are all projected from one common centre, which is God. The highest as well as the lowest life God

ever projected, will come back to the Father of all lives. “From whom all beings are projected, in whom all live, and unto whom they all return; that is God.”<sup>19</sup>

He says:

If the universe is the effect and God the cause, it must be God Himself—it cannot be anything but that. They [qualified non-dualists] start with the assertion that God is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe; that He Himself is the creator, and He Himself is the material out of which the whole of nature is projected. The word ‘creation’ in your language has no equivalent in Sanskrit, because there is no sect in India which believes in creation, as it is regarded in the West, as something coming out of nothing. It seems that at one time there were a few that had some such idea, but they were very quickly silenced. At the present time I do not know of any sect that believes this. What we mean by creation is projection of that which already existed. Now, the whole universe, according to this sect, is God Himself. He is the material of the universe. We read in the Vedas, ‘As the Urnanābhi (spider) spins the thread out of its own body ... even so the whole universe has come out of the Being.’

All this universe was in Brahman, and it was, as it were, projected out of Him, and has been moving on to go back to the source from which it was projected, like the electricity which comes out of the dynamo, completes the circuit, and returns to it. The same is the case with the soul. Projected from Brahman, it passed through all sorts of vegetable and animal forms, and at last it is in man, and man is the nearest approach to Brahman. To go back to Brahman from which we have been projected is the great struggle of life.

The projection and the Pralaya of the universe have been compared by theistic writers in India to the outbreathing and inbreathing of God; God, as it were, breathes out the universe, and it comes into Him again. When it quiets down, what becomes of the universe? It

exists, only in finer forms, in the form of cause, as it is called in the Sankhya philosophy. It does not get rid of causation, time, and space; they are there, only it comes to very fine and minute forms (2.245–6, 258–59, 434).

Plotinus taught that the creation of the world occurs by a series of radiations or emanations, originating in the One. It differs from the conception of creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The first emanation *ex deo*, out of God, is *nous*, divine intellect, *saguna* Brahman, Ishvara. From *nous* proceeds the world-soul, psyche, Mahat, universal mind, which is subdivided into an upper and lower aspect that is Nature, *physis*. Individual human souls proceed from the world-soul, and finally there is prime matter, *hyle*, utter privation, ‘an image of an image’, the lowest level of being. As the flow descends farther from the One, its divinity steadily decreases. The One is not affected or diminished by these emanations, Plotinus using the analogy of the sun emanating light without lessening itself, or the reflection in a mirror not effecting the object being reflected. He also uses the metaphors of the radiation of heat from fire, cold from snow, and fragrance from a flower. Being a great mystic, Plotinus emphasised attaining ecstatic union with the One which, according to his disciple Porphyry, he attained four times during the years he knew him.

Plotinus places the locus of the soul’s divinity in the *nous*, which corresponds to *saguna* Brahman and Ishvara. According to his ‘Doctrine of the Undescended Soul’, the highest part of the soul, which is our true self, never descends to the earth but permanently abides in the Divine realm, *nous*. He stated:

Our soul does not altogether come down, but there is always something of it in the Intelligible [Divine realm]; but if the part which is in the world of sense-perception gets control ... it prevents us from perceiving the things which

the upper part of the soul contemplates ... For every soul has something of it which is below, in the direction of the body, and what is above, in the direction of the Intellect [Nous].

The soul operates on three levels:

One part of our soul is always directed to the Intelligible realities [Divine realm], one to the things of this world, and one is in the middle between these.

For the soul is many things, and all things, both the things above and the things below down to the limits of all life, and we are each one of us an Intelligible universe, making contact with this lower world by the powers of soul below, but with the Intelligible world by its powers above.<sup>20</sup>

This light [of the Nous] shining in the soul illuminates it; that is, it makes it intelligent ... it turns the soul back upon itself and does not allow it to disperse, but makes it satisfied with the glory in itself; and it is certainly not a life of sense-perception either; for sense-perception looks outside and perceives the external world.

There is the One [Nirguna Brahman] beyond being ... next in order there is [Divine] Being and Intellect, and the nature of the [World] Soul in the third place ... we ought to think they are present also in ourselves ... outside the realm of sense-perceptions ... Our soul then also is a Divine thing and of a nature different [from the things of sense], like the universal nature of soul; and the human soul is perfect when it has intellect; and intellect is of two kinds, the one which reasons and the one which makes it possible to reason. Now this reasoning part of the soul, which needs no bodily instrument for its reasoning, but preserves its activity in purity in order that it may be able to engage in pure reasoning, one could without mistake place, as separate and unmixed with body, in the primary Intelligible [Divine] realm.

From the heavenly soul comes out an image of it and so to speak flows down from above and makes the living things on earth. Since,



then, this kind of soul tries to imitate the soul up there but is unable to because it is using worse bodies for its making and it is working in a worse place (5.3.8, 5.1.10, 2.1.15).

For every man is double, one of him is the sort of compound being and one of him is himself; and the whole universe is, one part the composite of body and a sort of soul bound to body, and one the soul of the All which is not in body but makes a trace of itself shine on that which is in body.

There must be true knowledge in the souls which are in us, and these are not images or likenesses of their Forms as things are in the sense-world, but those very Forms themselves (2.3.9, 5.9.13).<sup>21</sup>

A commentator presents Plotinus's ideas:

Our true Self, the 'man within', is our higher soul which exists eternally close to and continually illumined by Intellect [*nous*, *saguna* Brahman, Ishvara]. This does not sin or suffer and remains essentially free and unhampered in its rational and intellectual activities by the turbulence of the body and its world, into which the higher soul does not 'come down'. What enters the lower world is only an irradiation from the higher soul, an image or expression of it on the lower level, which joins with the bodily organism to form the 'joint entity', the 'composite'; it is this 'other man' or lower self which sins and suffers and is ignorant and emotionally disturbed, and in general is the subject of what most people regard as ordinary human experience.<sup>22</sup>

In the Intelligible divine world, *nous*, the soul eventually attains ultimate union with the one *nirguna* Brahman.

Ibn al-'Arabi (1165–1240), who was born in Muslim Spain taught that the universe including humans are a projection of the names of God. In a spiritual experience, God loves God. He wrote:

God epiphanizes Himself to the soul according to the essence of that soul, which is at once physical and spiritual. Then the soul becomes

aware that it sees God, but through Him, not through itself; it loves only Him, not through itself, but in such a way that it is He who loves Himself; it is not the soul which loves Him; it contemplates God in every being, but thanks to a gaze which is the Divine gaze itself. It becomes aware that He loves no other than Himself; He is the Lover and the Beloved, He who seeks and He who is sought.<sup>23</sup>

God (al-Haqq) is your mirror, that is the mirror in which you contemplate your self (*nafs*, *anima*), and you, you are His mirror, that is the mirror in which He contemplates His Divine Names ... Here we have a reciprocal relationship as between two mirrors facing one another and reflecting the same image back and forth (271).

The Russian mystical philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) indicated:

An individual person is only a ray, living and actual, but an inseparable ray of one ideal light—of the one Universal Substance. This ideal person or personified idea is merely an individualization of the All-Unity which is indivisibly present in each one of its individual expression.<sup>24</sup>

We have no need or right to limit man to the data of visible reality; we speak of the Ideal Man, [who is] nevertheless altogether essential and real—much more, incommensurably more essential and real than the visible manifestation of human beings ... If a man as a phenomenon is a transitory fact, then as essence he is necessarily eternal and all-embracing; what is, then, the Ideal Man? In order to be actual he must be one and [at the same time] many; consequently, he is not only the universal general essence of all human specimens, abstracted from them; he is a universal, and at the same time, an individual being, containing in himself all these specimens actually. Every one of us, every human being, is essentially and actually rooted, and takes part, in the Universal or Absolute Man ... every man is rooted in his deepest essence in

the eternal Divine world, that he is not only a visible phenomenon, i.e., a series of events and a group of facts, but an eternal and particular being, a necessary and irreplaceable link in the Absolute Whole ... Christian theologians and philosophers always distinguished between the finite phenomenon of the world in space and time, and the eternal existence of the idea of the world in the thought of God, i.e., in Logos.<sup>25</sup>

The idea of projecting images on the screen of Purusha was taught by Paul Tillich who called it the Unconditional. He stated that Sigmund Freud

calls God the projection of the father image. But every projection is not only a projection of something, it is also a projection upon something. What is this 'something' upon which the image of the father is 'projected' so that it becomes Divine? The answer can only be: It is projected upon the 'screen' of the Unconditional! And this screen is not projected. It makes projection possible ... The first and basic step is the assertion that man, as man, experiences something Unconditional.

Projection is always projection on something—a wall, a screen, another being, another realm. Obviously, it is absurd to class that on which the projection is realized [the screen] with the projection itself. A screen is not projected; it receives the projection. The realm against which the Divine images are projected is not itself a projection. It is the experienced ultimacy of being and meaning. It is the realm of ultimate concern.<sup>26</sup>

American born Professor David Bohm (1917–92) of the University of London taught to some extent an Indian approach to Quantum Physics, under the influence of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986). Bohm was also J Robert Oppenheimer's last graduate student and a protégé of Albert Einstein. In Bohm's system the unmanifested Implicate Order—comparable to Mahat, the universal body and mind—is an unbroken and undivided

totality and the ground of the Explicate Order, which is the physical and mental universe. The Implicate domain is a coherent, unified, and holistic substratum of physical energy and matter. All things are internally related, arising from a common ground that is immanent within them. 'The Implicate Order can be thought of as a ground beyond time, a totality out of which each moment is projected into the Explicate Order.'<sup>27</sup>

Following Bohm's logic all people have an Implicate Self and an empirical Explicate Self. He states:

'All implicates all', even to the extent that 'we ourselves' are implicated together with 'all that we see and think about'. So we are present everywhere and at all times, though only implicately (that is implicitly). ... Everything implicates everything in an order of undivided wholeness.<sup>28</sup>

Each of these elements is a projection, in a sub-totality of yet higher 'dimension'. So it will be ultimately misleading and indeed wrong to suppose, for example, that each human being is an independent actuality who interacts with other human beings and with nature. Rather, all these are projections of a single totality ... From the side of mind we can also see that it is necessary to go on to a more inclusive ground. Thus, as we have seen, the easily accessible explicit content of consciousness is included within a much greater implicit (or implicate) background.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, if we are separate it is because we are sticking largely to the manifest [Explicate] world as the basic reality where the whole point is to have separate units, relatively separate anyway, but interacting. In nonmanifest [Implicate] reality it's all interpenetrating, interconnected, one. So we say deep down the consciousness of mankind is one.<sup>30</sup>

### ***The Self as a Reflection of Divinity***

Acharya Madhva (1190–1276) expressed the theory that God is the archetype and the human

soul 'is a reflection [pratibimba] of the Lord'.<sup>31</sup> 'In stating that Jiva is a fragment there is no contradiction, because it is a reflection, it is in that manner a fragment.'<sup>32</sup> He supplies the analogy of the rainbow due to the sun's rays falling on a drop of rainwater. A commentator on Madhva's teachings, B N K Sharma tells us:

The rainbow is an image of the Sun's rays acting as their own medium. We have similarly to conceive of the Jiva [soul, individual self] as the image and medium of the power of Vishesa [the differentiating potency of things], at the same time. The mirror merely throws back the light falling on it. The raindrops, however, receive the light and they let it transverse through them and emerge out of them again, and in this process exhibit the glory of the sunlight. The raindrops must be deemed to be active, unlike the mirror which is merely passive ... Every one of us is a tiny rainbow which still has the potency, the capacity to receive and manifest the Divine light and transmit it ... It is to Madhva an indissoluble and perpetual relation. It is a relation of intrinsic dependence of the Jiva and its essential characteristics of reality, consciousness, and bliss [Sat-chit-ananda] [on God].<sup>33</sup>

A deep spiritual understanding of the conviction that we are a dependent reflection of the Divine, leads to an attraction and affection towards God and eventual liberation or moksha.

If the phenomenal world reflects the light of God—the sun as an analogy—there must be a reciprocal reflection back to God for her or him to know of the events in this realm. Consequently, a theory of double reflection, *anyonya-pratibimba*, was developed whereby, according to

Vijnanabhiksu [fl. 1550–1600], the process of perceptual knowledge is like this. When any object comes in contact with its special sense organ, the intellect [buddhi] becomes modified into the form of the object. Then, because of the predominance of sattva in it, the intellect

reflects the conscious self and seems to be conscious, in the same way in which a mirror reflects the light of a lamp and becomes itself luminous and capable of manifesting other objects. But next, the intellect, which is thus modified into the form of the object, is reflected back in the Self [Brahman, Purusha]. That is, the object is presented to the Self through a mental modification corresponding to the form of the object ... there is a reciprocal reflection of the Self in the intellect and of the intellect in the Self.<sup>34</sup>

As taught by Swamiji:

The Self of man is beyond all these, beyond nature. It is effulgent, pure, and perfect. Whatever of intelligence we see in nature is but the reflection of this Self upon nature. ... As the one sun, reflected on various pieces of water, appears to be many, and millions of globules of water reflect so many millions of suns, and in each globule will be a perfect image of the sun, yet there is only one sun, so are all these Jivas [individual souls] but reflections in different minds. These different minds are like so many different globules, reflecting this one Being. God is being reflected in all these different Jivas.<sup>35</sup>

The infinite is one and not many, and that one Infinite Soul is reflecting itself through thousands and thousands of mirrors, appearing as so many different souls. It is the same Infinite Soul, which is the background of the universe, that we call God (2.431).

Each soul is pure and perfect, omnipotent and omniscient, as they say in the Sankhya; but it can manifest itself externally only according to the mind it has got. The mind is, as it were, the reflecting mirror of the soul. My mind reflects to a certain extent the powers of my soul; so your soul, and so everyone's. That mirror which is clearer reflects the soul better. So the manifestation varies according to the mind one possesses; but the souls in themselves are pure and perfect (6.21).

Swamiji presents reflection in two different ways: 'When the mind comes near the Purusha

it is reflected, as it were, upon the mind, and the mind, for the time being, becomes knowing and seems as if it were itself the Purusha' (1.300). And: 'Behind this never-ending chain of motion is the Purusha, the changeless, the colourless, the pure. All these impressions are merely reflected upon it, as a magic lantern throws images upon a screen, without in any way tarnishing it' (1.299).

In the first example, the Purusha is reflected on the mind and in the second, mental impressions are reflected onto the Purusha. Is he supporting Vijñānabhikṣu's double-reciprocal-mutual reflection theory? Purusha shines on the insentient intellect producing mental images that are in turn projected back onto the screen of Purusha resulting in the phenomenal world, like a movie picture on a screen.

Swami Abhedananda (1866–1939) apprehended that each soul is an image of God:

When we speak of a man or woman as the image of God, we do not mean his or her physical form, but we mean the individual ego or the soul. ... The ego or individual soul is the image of God, who is the Spirit. He is the universal spirit. He is like the self-effulgent sun, and each individual soul is like a reflection of the sun on the mirror of the intellect. As the reflection cannot exist without being related to the object of reflection, so the individual soul cannot exist without being closely related to the Spirit, whose reflection it is.<sup>36</sup>

Every individual soul, whether it be more or less animal in its thoughts and actions, possesses the Divine image and is no other than the image of the Divine Principle or Being. The Divine Being is one and universal but its reflections or images are many ... the Divine image, falling upon the dull surface of the animal nature cannot reflect all the blessed qualities, cannot manifest all the Divine powers, but, on the contrary, appears animal in its tendencies and propensities. ... The individual soul, being the image of God, cannot exist even for a moment

without depending upon the Divine Principle. The individual ego owes its life, its intelligence, its intellect, mind, and all other mental and physical powers to that infinite source of all powers, all knowledge, all love, and everlasting happiness. In fact the individual soul does not possess anything. All these powers and forces that we are expressing in our daily life, whether animal, moral, or spiritual, do not belong to us, but proceed from that one inexhaustible source. Nor is the Divine Principle far from us; He is the soul of our soul, the life of our life, and the omnipotent essence of our being.<sup>37</sup>

A Bishop from Asia Minor, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–95) espoused the idea that the

first formation of man bears witness that our nature was made after the image and likeness of God; surely because being made after the image he possessed in all things the likeness to the archetype [God]. ... If then man is brought into being to be a participator in the Divine goods, he must of necessity be formed in such a way as to be equipped to share in those goods. Just as the eye by the brightness implanted in it by nature enters into communion with light attracting what is akin to it through its cognate power, so it was necessary that there be something mingled with man's nature akin to Divine that through the correspondence it might have the urge to what is proper to it.<sup>38</sup>

The Divine attributes of God are reflected in the mirror of the soul.

Nothing will prevent one from participating in the good, if he frees himself from such movements (toward sin), and returning to himself again, comes to fully know himself what he is by nature and through his own beauty in his image as in a mirror looks at the archetype. ... The mind has been adorned with the likeness of the beauty of the archetype and like a mirror is conformed to the character of that which it expresses. ... Just as a mirror which through skill has been made suitable for use on its clear surface accurately receives in itself the character of



the countenance it reflects, so the soul, after it has suitably conditioned itself for use and cast off all the mire pertaining to this world, impresses the pure form of the undefiled beauty in itself.

The Lord 'teaches us that he who has cleansed his heart from all creatures and from every passionate disposition sees in his own beauty the image of the Divine nature' (74). God's spiritual image is reflected on the mirror of the soul, according to an individual's capacity of reception. Humans can experience the sacred presence because of the indwelling image of God within them, which is the divine element that enables the believer to attain the mystic vision. 'If the image resembles in all respects the excellence of the Prototype, it would no longer be the image, but would itself be the Prototype, there being no means of distinguishing them.'<sup>39</sup> In a state of deification, which is the final goal of human life, the individual objectifies the image, by becoming an unblemished reflected image of God.<sup>40</sup>

John Dourley explains:

Bonaventure [1217–74] will thus refer to all of creation reflecting God in various degrees of intensity. All of creation reflects God in so much as it is a shadow (umbra) and a vestige of God. Every being is a shadow of God in as much as it points to God 'distantly and confusedly' as its cause 'according to an undetermined reason'. By this Bonaventure seems to mean that creatures can be seen as a referent to God as simply dependent on him as their cause and yet say very little about God. Every creature is also a vestige of God in as much as it points to God 'distantly but distinctly' as its threefold cause 'efficient, formal, and final as they are one, true and good' ... the image quality of man and the deiform [Divine] or similitude quality of man as graced really refer to the root nature of man as an image of God. The dynamic of grace, then, is a process of man's becoming a more perfect

realization of that which he always was as an image of God.<sup>41</sup>

When the soul is turned toward God, it is conformed to itself and the image is attained according to conformity; therefore, the image of God consists in these powers as they have God as object ... but when the soul is turned to inferior creatures it is conformed to those things in whom there is no image of God but a vestige. Therefore, the powers of the soul, in as much as they have inferiors for objects, recede from the nature of image because they recede from an expressed conformity (146).

In the chapter 'Recapitulation' of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*<sup>42</sup> Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), the founder of the Christian Science Church summarised her ideas:

Man is, and forever has been, God's reflection. God is infinite, therefore ever present, and there is no other power or presence. Hence the spirituality of the universe is the only fact of creation ... The Scriptures inform us that man is made in the image and likeness of God. Matter is not that likeness. The likeness of Spirit cannot be so unlike Spirit. Man is spiritual and perfect; and because he is spiritual and perfect, he must be so understood in Christian Science. Man is idea, the image of Love, he is not physique. He is the compound idea of God, including all right ideas; the generic term for all that reflects God's image and likeness; the conscious idea of being as found in Science, in which man is the reflection of God, or Mind, and therefore is eternal; that which has no separate mind from God; that which has not a single quality underived from Deity; that which possesses no life, intelligence, nor creative power of his own, that reflects spirituality all that belongs to his Maker.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding mortal man she said: 'It is really a self-contradictory phrase for man is not mortal, neither indeed can he be ... There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God

is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual.<sup>44</sup>


Traditional proponents of the theory of maya hold *nirguna* Brahman qua Atman to be real and all else to be an appearance. Conversely, Eddy considers personal God, *saguna* Brahman and the phenomenal world to be real, but all of its seeming imperfections are an unreality misperceived by the mortal mind. She writes:

Truth is immortal; error is mortal. Truth is limitless; error is limited. Truth is intelligence; error is non-intelligent. Moreover, Truth is real and error is unreal ... Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal ... If God, or good, is real, then evil, the unlikeness of God, is unreal. And evil can only seem to be real by giving reality to the unreal ... The only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief, until God strips off the disguise. They are not true because they are not of God. We learn in Christian Science that all in harmony of mortal mind or body is illusion, possessing neither reality nor identity though seeming to be real and identical.<sup>45</sup>

Eddy made the unnecessary and arbitrary inference that because people are spiritual beings they should not go to doctors. Availability of the modern advances in medicine has worked against this idea.

The reflection theory implies 'Degrees of Expression of Ultimate Reality', where ultimate Reality is God. The greater the manifestation, the more Reality is explicitly present in an object, the closer the reflected ectype is to the archetype, the more real it is.

Here and in other places the Self and universe has been described as related to God as a

part to a whole, mode, projection, emanation, externalisation, objectification, thought in divine mind, word or sound vibration through speech, mirror reflection off the mind, rainbow reflection, reciprocal double reflection, shadow, imprint of the divine image, ectype of archetype, shadow, transformation, and attribute of divine substance. Even with divine plenitude it does not seem that all of these relationships between God and the Self are possible. Future study is necessary to work out this difficult problem. 

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# Vedanta and Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Indian Poetry

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827) burnt into W B Yeats (1865–1939). A E Housman (1859–1936) absorbed both

Blake and Yeats:

On the idle hill of summer,  
Sleepy with the flow of streams,  
Far I hear the steady drummer  
Drumming like a noise in dreams ...  
Far the calling bugles hollo,  
High the screaming fife replies,  
Gay the files of scarlet follow:  
Woman bore me, I will rise.<sup>1</sup>

The dream-nature of all reality is important to note. This is Vedanta. True poetry reaffirms the truths of Vedanta from which arises cosmopolitanism. Neither the Cynics nor Martha Nussbaum invented cosmopolitanism. This description of hills and vales abound in Yeats's<sup>2</sup> and Housman's poetry. Pride in being resilient is seen in poems like Yeats's *An Irish Airman foresees His Death*. And all three of them have burnt into the poetry of Bashabi Bhattacharya née Fraser.<sup>3</sup> Fraser's poetic imagery abounds in the wonders of nature: hills, vales, starlit nights; all of course leading to resilience. Fraser's poetry affirms the fact that description of nature in poetry is not generally a commentary on nature but on the human relationship of a person to nature:

I have known loneliness  
When I walked down meandering roads  
That hugged the rhododendron mountain  
walls  
Through evening mists in spring.

I have felt abandoned ...

I discovered pettiness in a gloating vaunting  
Of the past that had been predatory<sup>4</sup>

The line 'When I walked down meandering roads' echoes Robert Louis Stevenson's (1850–94) *The Vagabond*. Further glossing or annotation of Fraser's poems are not needed here and will be done in a complete annotated edition of her poems by this author. The glossing or annotation proves her absorption of literary influences, which she may herself not be aware of. A poet who does not suffer the *anxiety of influence* of great poets before her or him is not worth annotating.

In 'From Salisbury Crag,'<sup>5</sup> she weaves myths as did Blake and Yeats before her.<sup>6</sup> Housman too wove myths into his poetry.

Mastery of imagery is essential for any poet. Poets may have agendas to grind. But that is strictly speaking, in the realm of the social sciences. Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us*<sup>7</sup> still remains unsurpassed in providing us with a methodology for separating good poetry from bad. Bad poets pretend to be abstract since they cannot construct or handle imagery. Fraser, like good poets before her, is a master of imagery construction. Her 'Suruchi for Guid Taste: A Menu Ye Cannae Beat'<sup>8</sup> is one of the most synaesthetic poems this author ever read. The aroma of good Indian-Scottish food jumps out of the text and yet not at the cost of imagery: 'There's licht stappit samosas an' cheese stappit nan' (73). The 'nan' imagery



is now cosmopolitan and is also an image of hospitality. Fraser's poetic corpus should be analysed for images, which establish her as a true cosmopolitan poet and a philosopher—all poets are philosophers—who makes imagery once again worthy of study and hospitable in the sense that Emmanuel Levinas defined hospitality in his *Entre Nous*.<sup>9</sup> She is not just an Indian poet but a poet who can be connected with the great English Victorian novelists. For examples, description of food is to be found in *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*<sup>10</sup> and in all of Charles Dickens's novels.<sup>11</sup>

It is crucial to see Fraser as a poet in continuity with great novelists and poets rather than bracket her as a poet of colour or a diasporic poet, and so on. Great novels are great poetry too. Fraser is suffering the fate of Maya Angelou (1928–2104). Professional scholars who have well-nigh destroyed literary studies are doing doctorates on Fraser as a poet of colour. Angelou is a great poet; it is incidental that she is a Black American poet. Had Angelou and Fraser not been Black and Indian poets respectively, then too their poetry would stand the test of time. But career academics will keep harping on their ideologies and skin-colour just to spite Harold Bloom's (b. 1930) understanding of literature in the latter's *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*.<sup>12</sup> Bloom includes many Indian books; one would know that if one bothered to read him. It is avant-garde to hate Bloom. Fraser in talks with this author declares herself sold on the idea that all poetry is eventually political. That is what happens when good poets have to obsessively write scholarly tomes on other poets for academic credibility.

The tradition of glossing poetry is now seen to be a waste of time. The fashion is to critique poetry. Therefore, it is worthwhile to gloss a few words in Fraser's poetry and both thus prove the

need for glossing, which is an ancient Indian tradition, as well as show how Fraser individualises tradition. 'I Have Known Loneliness' echoes T S Eliot's poetry; loneliness is also a textual register which puts her in continuum with Anglo-Saxon poetry, where loneliness is a recurrent trope.<sup>13</sup> Human experiences are universal and that is why the Hindu scriptures keep speaking of the essentially undifferentiated nature of the human person. Were human experiences like the *oceanic feeling*,<sup>14</sup> not real; the late Saint Pope John Paul II would not have studied and written extensively on the philosophy of the human person.<sup>15</sup> See the lines from Fraser's 'I am the Absolute: To the Dancer in Rupsha from Her Mother':

I stand at the centre, resolute,  
Unwilling to multiply or be divided  
Except in your dreams of the Absolute.<sup>16</sup>

Notice how glossing one word leads to other poems and notice too, the inherent Upanishadic wisdom or Vedanta in her works. Fraser's academic work has exposed her to Vedanta. One suspects her path-breaking work on Rabindranath Tagore has willy-nilly turned her an advocate for Vedanta. In a private conversation with this author she has shown admiration for the *Isha Upanishad*. This is one of the shortest major Upanishads, and in a certain sense, the essence of the Bhagavadgita.

Tagore and through him, Fraser is more of a monist than a liberal humanist. Works on her poetic corpus fail to bring out the monist or Advaita Vedantist in her. Existing scholarship consigns her to a status of non-religious poet. This author is of the opinion that she needs to be seen as a religious poet too. Her poems, like 'An Illusion'<sup>17</sup> simultaneously show on her the influence of Henry Vaughan's religious sensibility as we find in Vaughan's 'The World', and also in mystical union with the supreme god-head aka Brahman in the Upanishads. The title

of the poem itself indicates her understanding of *samsara* as Vedanta sees it; it is how Raja Rao (1908–2006) before her saw the world in his own novels. Fraser's biblical understanding of the world is to be found in poems such as 'The Suffering Symbol of Humanity' (24–5) and 'There Will Be Time For Everything' (29). This trope of the Suffering Servant we encounter within Judeo-Christian literature is also a recurrent trope in her poetry. The trope of the Suffering Servant is best elucidated in the Qumran Scrolls, which were accidentally discovered during 1946–57 in Palestine. It is important that we research Fraser's religious zeitgeist and world view for two reasons: none before has attempted it while it is certainly there in her poems and more importantly, in spite of Fraser's own Enlightenment-informed scholarly writings—also to be found in her numerous interviews; she is very much a product of Tagore's Vedanta and her own schooling under Roman Catholic nuns. It is never easy to silence the religious element in anyone, leave alone a poet like Fraser. 'Satan' (44) and 'The Saviour' (45) are explicitly biblical and Christian in their subjects and tonalities. Existing scholarship on Fraser does nowhere mention her as a very religious poet, albeit without fanaticism.

It is wrongly assumed that the main mode of poetics in English written by Indian-origin writers is realist; anti-romantic and counterpoised against the likes of Emily Dickinson and even Rabindranath Tagore.<sup>18</sup> As it were, Tagore is the last acceptable Romantic in Indian poetry. These assumptions do more harm within Indian letters since being a Romantic is not an easy task. One suspects that the inability to carry on the heritage of Romanticism in their own works force many Indian poets and scholars to decry Romanticism. It is also fashionable to pooh-pooh the idea that poetry is universal and essentially apolitical. The transcendence of poetry is

not permitted in intellectual discussions of poets and their works. A K Ramanujan (1929–93),<sup>19</sup> Kamala Das (1934–2009), and in Bengali, Sunil Gangopadhyay (1934–2012) did great disservice to Indian poetry and poetry at large by haranguing against the Romantics. Fraser's poetry is generally seen as poetry produced from her singular position as a Bengali woman writing, teaching, and living in Scotland. Existing scholarship has successfully but wrongly pigeonholed her as a diasporic<sup>20</sup> writer engaged with political issues of her own times. This article will revisit the politics of poetics in Indian and Western academia. Also it will establish that good poetry does not necessarily demand one to know of the poet's socio-cultural milieu. This too is nothing new since 1929.<sup>21</sup>

So what is poetry? This is the question that generations of English major students have to first come to terms with. They are systematically fed William Wordsworth's definition of poetry.<sup>22</sup> That is fine. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's (b. 1919) definition of poetry is more natural: 'Poetry is eternal graffiti written in the heart of everyone.' In other words, that is poetry which is inscribed in our hearts; akin to what is known within jurisprudence as natural justice or natural law. In other words, poetry is that which one knows instinctively to be poetry. Like we do not need to define the air that we breathe in for the humdrum purpose of living; poetry is that which quickens our hearts.<sup>23</sup> Ramanujan experimented with free verse and Kamala Das had her feminist agenda to grind. And these too are fine. But Das's poetry will not be remembered since it is more diatribe than literature. She will of course be adulated in various studies' departments. But these latter are not literature departments; they are social sciences' departments and therefore her poetry like Sylvia Plath's poetry will be recommended reading in area studies where social scientists will nitpick their

writings for understanding social upheavals. In short, their poetry is versified journalism and not exactly, *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400) or *Tintern Abbey* by William Wordsworth (1770–1850).

Every time one reads Ramanujan one only remembers that rivers in South India regularly flood and a few cattle die and float away each year in those floods.<sup>24</sup> And it is not faraway that one will entirely forget Ramanujan, when Indian writings in English are no longer taught.<sup>25</sup> Walt Whitman (1819–92), Robert Frost (1874–1963), and much earlier, Kalidasa (c. 4th century CE), are all poets not because they are only read by American Studies' scholars and Indologists respectively. They are poets because their words once read become *eternal graffiti* in our hearts. 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd' by Walt Whitman written in 1865, is poetry. If anyone has doubt about it being poetry without doing courses in American Studies, then that person will have to study lifelong to verify that *Abhijnana-Shakuntalam* of Kalidasa is poetry too! Bashabi Fraser happens to be a Bengali woman who has settled in Scotland and she has played into the hands of academicians of all sorts and has been slotted as a diasporic feminist writer.<sup>26</sup> Fraser, in a personal communicate to me, has this to say of those who she thinks influenced her:

I do read and relate to Elizabeth Bishop, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Mary Shelley, Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Gaskell, etc. More recently, I like poets like Sylvia Plath, Carol Anne Duffy, Debjani Chatterjee, Shanta Acharya, Usha Kishore, Imtiaz Dharker, Sharon Oates, Grace Nicols, Jackie Kay and others. ... Women fiction writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Azar Nafisi, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Ashapurna Devi, and Mahasweta Devi are amongst those, whose works move me.

Her choice of writers or poets is exactly what an English literature professor will come up with. This obsession with conflating oneself with one's poetry is dangerous and often, counterproductive. What Fraser does not realise is that she is a poet worth our time because her poetry is part of that eternal graffiti etched in all our hearts. It has a Jungian collective effect on us.

In *Life*, Fraser struggles with major poets who matter. We can see her grappling with T S Eliot when she writes:

I have seen the storm in my teacup<sup>27</sup> (Life)

And

The mist is amazing—  
It has Machiavellian finesse  
Settling on windows of this  
Speeding train's prowess<sup>28</sup>

And she struggles with Robert Browning, W B Yeats, Shakespeare and John Keats in her 'Why?'<sup>29</sup>

There is a valley tucked away in mountains  
Where I can guide your steps today ...  
And what will happen when you wake again?<sup>30</sup>

And in *An Ethereal Sleeping Beauty*<sup>31</sup> among so many other poets she tries to overcome Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89). And this is the early Fraser.

Bashabi Fraser obsesses with Rabindranath Tagore. If one were to be a Bengali litterateur, this is inevitable. Either one keeps adulating Tagore and fixates on him as Harold Bloom fixates on Shakespeare or, like the late Sunil Gangopadhyay, bad-mouth Tagore. Fraser belongs to the first group and in her ecstasy about Tagore, one suspects that she has forgotten that her genius lies not in editing learned tomes on Tagore but honouring Tagore by writing poetry, which is unique and not imitative of Tagore. Thankfully, she has been able to slowly work her way through and out of Tagore and those English poets who influenced Tagore:

The scaffolding is the backdrop  
 To the story of conservation ...  
 Facilitated by the muscle  
 Of dedicated energy  
 That roughens the sinews  
 And one labour leads to another  
 Fruit, building the perfect body  
 That prompts the applause  
 Of an approving population.<sup>32</sup>

Fraser has made a name for herself as a Tagore scholar. In her article 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision'<sup>33</sup> we see her sparkle as a Tagore expert. She outdoes Ketaki Kushari Dyson (b. 1940). Fraser is less well known than Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947) mentioned in the beginning of this article, since she is honest. Nussbaum has made her career by hiding her Jewishness and tout-ing cosmopolitanism through her weak readings of Rabindranath Tagore's corpus. While Nussbaum deliberately forgets Tagore's Vedanta, Fraser nowhere in her 'Introduction' to 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision' forgets that Tagore was a product of his times and milieu. The Indian Renaissance, as Fraser puts it, was bookended by the Tagores—Dwarkanath was part of its beginning and Rabindranath, sort of closed the Indian Renaissance. And those times were deeply religious as well as revolutionary. It is this intellectual honesty that sets Fraser apart from Nussbaum's non-transcendental discourse about liberal humanism:

Tagore was an environmentalist, a social and educational reformer, decades ahead of his time. He went back to Indian tradition in Upanishadic interpretations and welcomed modern scientific studies in a liberal education that wedded the past to the present, brought the East and the West in an inter-dependent continuum that was global in scope and vision. This is what Tagore Studies opens up (162).

What Fraser can easily own up to; that is Tagore's religious roots, others within Tagore scholarship simply cannot come to terms with.

Apart from Fraser, it seems to this author that the true Tagore causes anxiety in most. They want to répress the religious Tagore. Fraser in her 'Introduction' to the special issue of *Literature Compass*, which contains her article, enacts the reversal of the répression of the religious, essentially Upanishadic Tagore. Répression here indicates a political act elaborated by Michel Foucault in his *Madness and Civilization*.<sup>34</sup> Igor Grbić's essay in this special issue of *Literature Compass* is very original and is existentially true. But without Fraser's intervention as the writer of the 'Introduction', this volume would lose its value and be lost in the morass of rapidly increasing Tagore scholarship worldwide.

The culture brigade which makes its business discussing poetry will have their insightful moments reading *Ragas and Reels*. Here at last is the political Fraser, and as we already know, Fraser herself believes that poetry can only be political. But looking at these lines from a non-political aka ideological manner, the poem is about conserving a city, which needs conservation. Only those who take examinations need to know and proclaim that Robert Browning's Duke in his *My Last Duchess* may have been a historical tyrant. Common sense tells us we are encountering a male chauvinist in Browning's poem who has most probably murdered his wife before launching into a beautiful oration. Similarly, it is redundant to know that Fraser is writing about a Scottish city and a migrant labourer. Searching for Bashabi Fraser on the Internet makes one feel that she is either of these four: a woman poet, a Bengali poet, a Scottish poet, or a high-profile academician. The former three roles crib and cram Fraser within South Asian Studies' literature—if such can be called literature! She is Thomas Gray's (1716–71) *The Bard* warning us against dogmatism, fascism, and xenophobia.<sup>35</sup>

Who will not enjoy her wonderful poem 'Tweedledum - Tweedledee'?<sup>36</sup> Sukumar Ray



(1887–1923) comes to mind. Just because she has written a long poem ‘From the Ganga to the Tay’<sup>37</sup> where the Holy Ganges shelters meditating holy men (45) and the Scottish Tay gave refuge to hermits (46), it does not mean that Fraser is Scottish, Bengali, or Indian. This long poem indicates that Fraser is trying to reinvent the epic form in English and she has so far done a good job of it. Her epic is worth reading because Fraser is experimenting with a form, which has no takers today since there are no writers of Fraser’s calibre in recent times. ‘From the Ganga to the Tay’ is on a par with Thomas Hardy’s (1840–1928) *The Dynasts* and Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*.

This author, as a postgraduate student, had Indian writings in English as his special paper. It is sad that the syllabus framers did not include Bashabi Fraser as one of the set poets for study then, nor even now. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b. 1947) too does not mention her anywhere in his magnum opus on Indian literature.<sup>38</sup> The time has come that we include Bashabi Fraser in our school books along with Emily Dickinson (1830–86) and Robert Frost. It does not need saying that she should be taught also at the bachelor’s level and of course, at the masters’ level in English literature courses everywhere. How Amit Chaudhuri (b. 1962) and Jeet Thayil (b. 1959)<sup>39</sup> missed including her in their literature anthologies flabbergasts this author. Fraser’s ‘Student Monk’<sup>40</sup> should have been included by Thayil since he is bipartisan in matters of religion. For example, Chaudhuri and Thayil not only miss Fraser but also another important poet. This may be because both Chaudhuri and Thayil are better as creative writers.

Further, critical work is best left to critics. This author who has never written a line of poetry himself, being bereft of originality, knows that the job of a literary critic is never to philosophise, keep singing praises for those who are already known, but to consciously connect


different media with poets and novelists who are geniuses. Here is another poet, whose poem was sent electronically to the author, whose work Chaudhuri and Thayil have both missed. Swami Vivekananda and his master Sri Ramakrishna, would be pleased with the following poem and the Tamil movie *Kabali* (2016), which deals with the annihilation of caste:

*The Shadowed God*

Large umbrella, small umbrella  
One for God, one for priest  
Uppity gentry clinging to umbrellas  
Running, not from the sun  
But from people  
Shadowed by them  
Lives or mere shadows?  
Meek faceless followers  
Voiceless slaves  
Bound to the bodies of the holy  
Necessary shadows  
Yet feared shadows  
O’ God, why create the sun,  
If shadows were to be shunned?  
Was it you?  
Or these your priests?  
I remain in the shadows  
As one of them  
Waiting for the sun to illumine.

This author is glad to have discovered the poet Fraser and this other poet, who has requested anonymity for the moment. And this author is glad to show that the main mode of Indian poetry in English is Romantic and Vedantic. In fact, the main mode of all good poetry is Vedantic. Shakespeare’s sonnets deal with the transient nature of samsara expressed through physical beauty. Therefore, Vedanta is the sine qua non of true art.

Vedanta is the essence of Hinduism. The essence of Hinduism is that all religions lead to God qua Brahman. All people are the same; differences are only apparent. And the Godhead permeates everything and *is* everything. This is

neither religious nor moral relativism. As the Hindu seers see reality, Vedanta asserts: 'Truth is one; sages call it by various names.' Vedanta is the logical conclusion to all knowledge honestly probed and acquired. 

### Notes and References

1. A E Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*, 35.
2. See W B Yeats, *The Stolen Child*.
3. She was born in 1954 in Purulia, West Bengal and acquired the surname Fraser through her marriage. She is known globally as Bashabi Fraser.
4. 'Isolated', Bashabi Fraser, *Life* (London: Diehard, 1997), 7. This book should be compulsory reading in school syllabi. Especially poems like *A Tryst with Time* (26). This poem will teach adolescents the need to seek out allusions; to admire rhythm and to supplement *She Walks in Beauty* by Lord Byron (1788–1824).
5. See 'From Salisbury Crags', Bashabi Fraser, *Ragas and Reels: Visual and Poetic Stories of Migration and Diaspora: Poems* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2012), 53.
6. The ability to construct and negotiate myths is the hallmark of a great poet. A poet who invents totally new myths is a bad poet. Fraser, like Blake and Yeats before her creates new myths. This mythopoeic nature of Fraser's poetry cannot be assessed here due to constraints of space.
7. See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1935).
8. See *Ragas and Reels*, 73.
9. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, trans. Michael B Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University, 2000).
10. See William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848).
11. There is no distinction between good poetry and great novels. If a great novelists cannot be compared to a great poet, then the novelist will not stand the test of time. For example, James Joyce's (1882–1941) novels are indeed poetry and not merely poetical. Existing scholarship on Fraser has not compared her poems and epic to novels. This is a lacuna in Fraser scholarship which needs to be addressed, but is beyond the scope of this essay.
12. See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994). A book which is no longer part of English Literature syllabi in most places in the world, yet a book which counters fads like fat studies.
13. See 'The Seafarer' and 'Wulf and Eadwacer'.
14. See Romain Rolland's letter to Sigmund Freud dated 5 December 1927.
15. See Karol Wotjyla (later Saint Pope John Paul II), *Ocena Możliwości Zbudowania Etyki Chrześcijańskiej Przy Założeniach Systemu Maksa Schelera* (Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of Max Scheler's System) (Polish) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980).
16. Bashabi Fraser, *Tartan and Turban* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2004), 44. This book should be taught as part of new literature in English at the graduate level.
17. See *Life*, 31.
18. In classrooms across the world today Romanticism is decried. But that is the main and only worthy mode of poetry and even, all literature. The last Romantic is not Yeats but Fraser now. The title will hopefully shift. There is nothing other than Romanticism in poetry. Students of English literature need to understand that Modernist poets like T S Eliot and W H Auden and later, Ted Hughes are all negotiating Romanticism and not what is mistaken as Modernism. Fraser is not a Modernist in the pejorative sense of the term. Her experiment with the epic-form makes her a classicist. But which classicist worth one's mettle is not a Romantic? Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) too was a Romantic. Just because someone happens to be categorised as a sturdy Victorian does not mean that she or he escapes the influence of the Romantics.
19. See A K Ramanujan, 'Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation' in *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 22–49.
20. This is another term which is used without much thought. Diaspora is a specifically biblical term which leads to *Parousia*. The global culture brigade forgets that most people of Indian

- origin in the First World will never return to any 'promised homeland'. So this author asks the discerning student—established self-proclaimed literature gate-keepers are mostly beyond help!—to interrogate the term diaspora using biblical scholarship and not books written by the likes of the ancient Padmini Mongia.
21. See I A Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1930).
  22. See William Wordsworth, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' (1800) <<http://www.bartleby.com/39/36.html>> accessed 10 August 2016.
  23. Quickening of our hearts is a trope in poetry. Medieval English literature stresses this trope. Fraser quickens our hearts.
  24. See A K Ramanujan, *A River*.
  25. Literature students have to be very careful that while studying they do not fall for fads: *isms*, which will fade once some or the other eminent teacher retires! For example, once linguistics was the staple of many English literature departments because someone in the department had a bias to that field. But linguistics has little to do with untameable literature or fat studies. This author once heard an overweight literature professor lecture on fat studies!
  26. Being a successful feminist cannot be reason enough to be considered a great poet. The late Mahashveta Devi (1926–2016) was famous not for being a social reformer or for running non-governmental organisations. She was a great word-artist and therefore people noticed her social work. Not the other way around. Fraser's feminism will be remembered because she is a great poet, not because she is a feminist thinker. Who is a greater feminist: Charlotte Brontë (1816–55) or Toril Moi (b. 1953)? Outside of hallowed social sciences' departments few have heard of Moi!
  27. 'Entrapping Light', *Life*, 7.
  28. 'As I am Carried from Edinburgh to London' in *Tartan and Turban*, 88.
  29. See *Life*, 51.
  30. The influence of John Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is evident here. Keats was influenced by Vedanta through the German Idealists and the chimera that is the lady without gratitude or mercy is the true nature of samsara.
  31. See *Life*, 23–4.
  32. 'Building the Bodyline', *Ragas and Reels*, 75.
  33. See Bashabi Fraser, 'Rabindranath Tagore's Global Vision', *Literature Compass*, 12/5 (May 2015), 161–72.
  34. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage, 1961).
  35. See 'Medical Aid for Palestine' in Bashabi Fraser, *Letters to My Mother and Other Mothers* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2015), 48–9. Fraser's poetry is in the best Vedantic tradition: '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*; the world is one family.' Sri Ramakrishna would have been happy with Fraser.
  36. See *Life*, 33.
  37. See Bashabi Fraser, *From the Ganga to the Tay: A Poetic Conversation between the Ganges and the Tay—An Epic Poem* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2009). Excerpts from this book should be compulsory reading in any masters' syllabi in English literature. And the entire book should be compulsory reading within specialisations, which deal with neo-epic genres and in courses which offer Indian English poetry at the masters' level.
  38. See *A History of Indian literature in English*, ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (New York: Columbia University, 2003). He has a stellar group of scholars writing for him but none of them showed critical acumen by omitting Fraser. That may be because this stellar group sold out to anti-Hindu forces. Fraser's alliance with Hinduism will disqualify her from being included within bombastic poetry discussions. Her *Ragas and Reels* is replete with Hindu symbols and has explicit Hindu and Christian poems. These are enough to enrage the subaltern attendants, who have taken over Shimla's Indian Institute for Advanced Studies and also, centres for academic excellence in India like the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
  39. See Amit Chaudhuri, *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (London: Picador, 2001); and *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets*, ed. Jeet Thayil (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2008). Thayil, as has been mentioned in this article, should confine himself to writing original stuff and leave editing to professional critics.
  40. See *Ragas and Reels*, 85.

# Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THEFORE NO BIRTH OR DEATH can be predicated of what exists ultimately. Therefore to a man of the highest wisdom there is nothing to be added to or subtracted from. All is non dual *Ātman*. Even what appears as unreal *Bhāvas* to the ignorant is non-dual *Ātman* to the *Jñāni*.<sup>54</sup> Everything is real to the knower of the Atman. It is all real.

In Zen Buddhism these ideas come. One constant sentence in Suzuki: 'Samsara is nirvana, nirvana is samsara.'<sup>55</sup> Samsara means the world of change, both are the same. That is the idea. That is the highest level of truth. We come down not to make these distinctions. As we say, in our physics that if it is all quantum energy, but I see differences; yes, look at it in the human angle—it is all differences. That human angle is mentioned here. Classical physics is a limiting case of quantum physics. Limiting case; you have to come down a lot to see all these differences. Then conduct waking experiences in this form. But if you conduct it in the light of this truth you won't commit blunders here. You remain in the waking state and in the world but remember everything is the Atman. 'See God in Everything' is Vivekananda's one lecture; God in everything. That is a wonderful vision. Then you won't be bound. That's the idea. *Vyavahara* continues, activities continue, knowledge does not destroy your daily activity, it illumines it. Now it is all delusion. When a man murders another it is all delusion. He thinks he is separate. If he knows the Atman he will never do so. Only love can come through

the knowledge of oneness. That is all. No hatred, no violence. When more of Atman philosophy is presented to the world there will be less of violence, lesser wars. We are all one in the Atman.

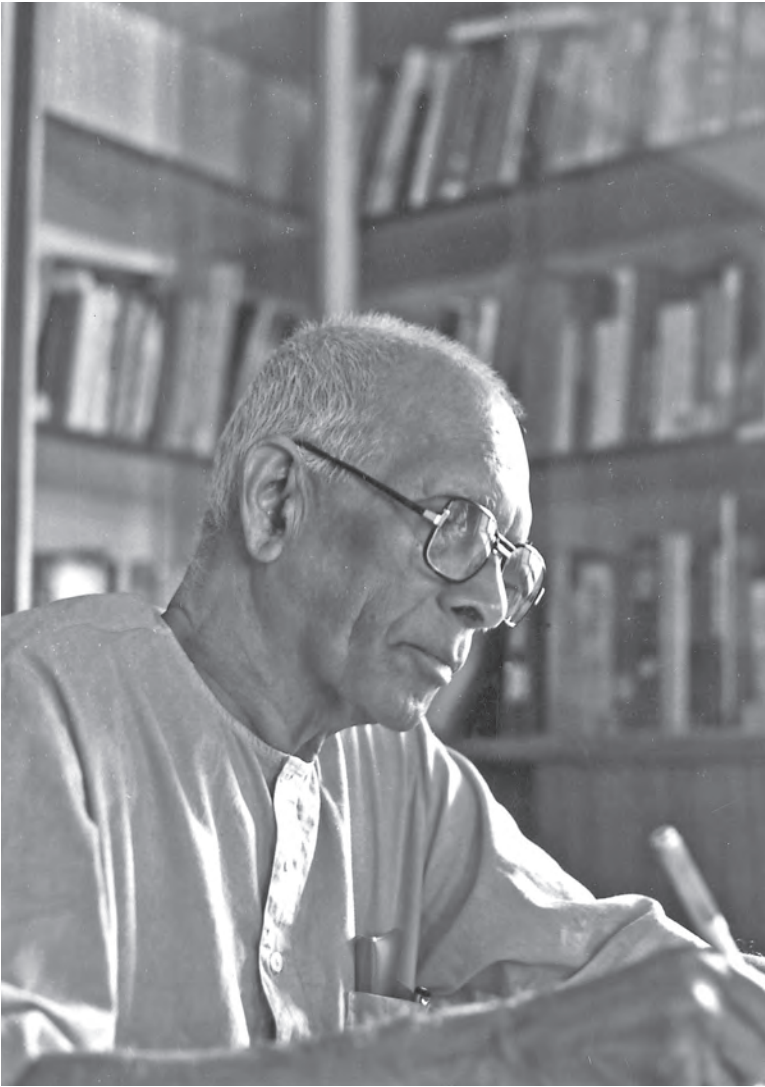
There is no comparison with the bliss of Atman. One infinitesimal particle of the bliss of Atman is what you get as sensory experience. You find it in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*.<sup>56</sup> Say animal pleasure, human pleasure—what is the difference? We have got intellect; we have got keener pleasures than what animals can have. Theirs is purely eating and drinking and sense pleasure. Man's pleasures are mental, intellectual, aesthetic, much keener than they have. And spiritual is still higher.

Are physical things not painful? You eat and get stomach pain. Animals also get stomach pain. I have seen dogs suffering from stomach trouble. Pain is a part of life whether it is physical or mental. Pain and pleasure—they go together.

An idea of the bliss of Atman you can see in everyday life. See now in dream, waking, and sleep. In sleep the joy that you experience is tremendous. You can do without food; you can't do without sleep. The bliss of sleep, wonderful it is. It comes from within. It comes from yourself, not from objects. Joy from objects is much less intense than joy from your own self. If sleep can show it, samadhi will show it a million times more. The infinite Atman is of the nature of bliss, infinite ocean of bliss. Say, Ramakrishna, Jesus, and Buddha how did they live? Like that.

Have you got a copy of the last message of Sri Krishna? There is an account there. There





was a young man who has realised the Atman— young, beautiful, intelligent. He is walking in the street and a king, the emperor of India then, was passing by. He just saw this man. He was so struck, he went up to him. He said: ‘You are so young, so energetic, having a beautiful face and body, but so calm and so peaceful and so blissful. What is the source of all this bliss, please tell me?’ *‘Atmani anandakaranam; you derive bliss in your Self alone.’*<sup>57</sup> ‘You don’t enjoy any sense pleasure as we do but you are full of bliss, please give me the reason. People are burnt in

the world, they run after this, they run after that, and you run after nothing. You are like an elephant enjoying the cool waters of the Ganges, where all round there is fire going on. No fire can touch you; this is the language he has used. Please tell me the secret of this. Who is your guru? What is he teaching? I want to know’, so the emperor asked. He smiled: ‘Yes, what you say is true. But I have got not one guru, but twenty-four gurus. I learnt from them using my intelligence; they didn’t actually teach me, I have observed and learnt my lesson.’ Then he goes on, telling what he learnt from all—including birds, fishes—all sorts of things come there (2.25–3.29).

So, that wonderful state— ever blissful without eating, drinking, ever blissful—that is a demonstration, not a theory. The very fact that you don’t run after things and yet you are full of joy. If you don’t give ordinary

people any joyous things, they will become morose. Isn’t it? Pathetic, half dead. But, here is another type—they don’t experience anything, yet they are full of joy. There is some source of that joy, but where is that. Here, it is from me. So the *Vivekachudamani* compares a man of spiritual realisation and bliss with a baby. He has drunk mother’s milk, lying on his back, playing, just looking this way and that way, alone, with himself—that is the picture. Full of joy coming from within, nothing outside, that is the innocent pure joy of the baby. That is the knower of the Atman.

Narada is a great devotee. He told Sri Krishna one day: 'You speak so much of maya—the whole world is maya—I don't know what maya is. I am always free. I am a devotee of the Lord. I want to experience your maya a little.' Sri Krishna said: 'Don't try that. It is a dangerous thing.' Narada was illumined. He was ever free; he never understood what is maya. So, he said, 'I want to know this maya a little.' So, Sri Krishna said, 'Don't try it, you may get caught up; it is not very easy to handle.' But still Narada said, 'I want to, I want to.' 'Alright,' Sri Krishna said. So, one day they were going together. Suddenly, Sri Krishna said: 'Narada, I am very thirsty. Will you please get me a glass of water from the neighbouring village?' There he goes, and then, he sees a young woman offering water. He looks at her, a love came in the heart, and he tells the father, 'I want to marry this girl. Will you please allow?' Okay. So, he marries and becomes the son-in-law, works there, he has children; everything goes on fine. And then, one day floods came. And the hut fell, and he was carrying the children holding the wife in one hand, children here and children there, two-three children were there. One by one the flood waters carried away and his heart broke. Then finally, his wife was carried away. His heart broke; he was standing in the midst of the water with a deep feeling: what has happened, what has happened, what is this? Then, somebody patted on his back. It was Sri Krishna, asking Narada, 'Where is my glass of water? For half an hour, I have been waiting.' 'Half an hour!' exclaimed Narada. 'The whole lifetime I have lived here in this world. Oh! Enough! Enough! I don't want to see your maya any further,' said Narada and he went back. That is the story. Maya is tremendous.

Sri Krishna gave Narada this experience. Narada wanted it, so Sri Krishna gave him this experience. Though Sri Krishna told him: 'Don't ask it. It will be difficult to come out, once you

get in.' A rat can get into a cage, but cannot get out. Though he can come out, as he came in, he can come out, but you don't know. That is maya. Once you are in, you are caught. You take the body of a pig for example: live in it—beautiful, very comfortable, and nice—don't think it is not nice. You don't compare with yourself. Ask a pig to change his body to yours, he will never allow it. He will say: 'I want this body.' That is the maya there. Beautiful grunting and all that, is going on. So, maya is a wonderful story. So many stories are there. These are real facts, you get caught. So in human beings—is it not through maya that people murder? Find out! People cheat, people murder—only due to maya. All are caught up in this maya. In the same condition they will never do this kind of thing. Even this violence and war is maya.

Britain has got maya vampire, even now. The vampire is all gone; maya still remains. Maya is a fact. This Atman is free from maya. Whenever I travel, this Holland is full of fog. Rarely do they get sunlight. So, when I approached Amsterdam, I was always in sunlight from Berlin to Amsterdam, because I am twenty-five thousand feet high—no fog there. But, when I look down, Holland is full of fog. So I come down into the world of fog, maya. So I told them: 'You see! Till now, I was in such a beautiful world of light, now I am in the world of maya, foggy world!' Better to have a balloon, twenty-five thousand feet high, remain there, do all the work, come and sleep at night below. So that you can say—no maya there. Maya is only here. Maya is a fact. Very beautiful idea.

The Atman is beyond maya. Atman's own power is maya. Atman is all one. What is love? Oneness. Love destroys distance, separateness. That is the meaning of love. Pure love comes only from the sense of oneness. Wherever there is distinction there is no love. We are one—that

is the meaning of love. The Atman alone knows what love is.

Bliss and pure love are all different forms of emotional expression. For instance, joy—you eat, you get joy. You ask the question: Is joy in the food or in your mind? What is the source of joy—food or you? The real answer is: joy is only a state of mind. Food is only an instrument. Something hiding in you, that hiding is removed by taking that food and joy is manifested. Happiness is in the mind and not in things—that is a big truth. Certain occasions come to you to manifest that joy. Eating food becomes an occasion to manifest the joy that is there. When you don't eat, there is privation. All experiences are like that. Then comes a state where you don't need this stimulus from outside. Joy is always there.

For children, we need external stimulus. Just like, when they do something, you must clap your hand, so far as the children are concerned. When you are a grandmother, you don't want anybody to clap or smile. When a baby smiles you must clap your hands to encourage the baby, because you don't know how to bring joy from within yourself, at that stage. But when you become grown up, you know that. You don't depend upon the clapping. Very interesting, grandmother smiles and you clap—it looks ridiculous. You can bring out from yourself. This is the truth about men: There is infinite bliss hidden, and then all the privation comes. To remove it you earn money, you earn everything. Slowly learn your lesson then finally the truth comes: 'Now I realise there is no need for all these things. I am full.' If a householder can realise it before he passes out of the world, it will be a tremendous thing: 'Yes, I am full.' Then, all these old age homes will be changed. There will be full of joy. Today they are sorrow-ridden faces. All comfort, all convenience is there, but sorrow-ridden people. Why? Things they depend

upon. They don't depend upon themselves. The Atman is no more manifested. If ever this philosophy becomes current, old age homes will be the happiest places, because no botheration, no problems are there. They have become calm and quiet. That will be a big transformation.

When the Atman manifests, as you grow older, you enjoy old age. Today we are afraid of old age. We look down upon it. Nobody wants to be old, especially in our civilisation. A man with a bald head—he will try to cover it with four hair-pieces, he will bring it here—there is no harm in showing it! Falsity, falsity, falsity—life is a falsity. 'So, we adjust a false self to a false world', says R R Laing, British psychologist. Today, we adjust a false self to a false world. That will be pricked with this knowledge of the Atman. And a more natural and spontaneous life will come. That is what the young people wanted in the 1960s—natural life. They didn't understand the meaning of it. So, they became criminals, drunkards, drug addicts, and all that. That famous festival of music, somewhere in Kent, two-three hundred thousand came. Oh, it became a riotous thing—it came in the papers; in the year 1971–72, at that time. Without the knowledge of the Atman all these efforts to become natural and spontaneous will perish. It will make it an animal spontaneity.

Yes, we can learn from nature. Those twenty-four gurus—many of them were simply nature's things. But, it is your mind that is creating and is able to extract lessons from nature. An active mind can extract lessons from nature by observing things. A kite got a fish in his mouth and it was running, so many crows followed it. He goes up, the crows follow there; goes down, the crows follow there. It is harassed by crows. This man, the Avadhuta, is watching. Finally, the kite dropped the fish, sat on a tree calmly, and the crows got this fish and they fought against each

other, and the kite was watching the whole thing from the tree. This man saw it: 'Oh, I want to be like you. This kind of running after possession, competition, struggle—when you are out of it, you are full of peace and joy. You are my guru. So, I salute you.' And, then he walked away. That is the first guru. This kind of anxiety, worry over possessions, fighting and all that. What is the high tension of the share market, do you know: high tension, blood pressure increasing, high tension. So, they are practising yoga now to get relaxation in Wall Street.

Whatever reality they have, they have as events. When you use the word 'event', you weld space and time together. In space-time, we don't have objects, only events. In a cinema, you have only events; no objects there, because time is one of the items. So, today's physics does like that. All these are events. Passing events, not even events, but passing events.

In dreams what do you find? Mental configuration is what you get in dream. All events—the word 'event' is fully applicable only to a dream and in twentieth-century physics; reality as seen by physics.

When you study objects deeply, they become events. No stereotype self-existent object is there, constantly changing phases of objects making an event. I told you about the train's passage. When you have time and space coordinates, then you have events. Train movement becomes an event in space and time. The whole world is like that—we see it as reality. But from common sense, it is different. So, do you want to live according to common sense or according to truth? If it is truth, you must treat the world as unreal and the real is only God. God alone is real. That is a great teaching in all high religion. God alone is real. Today's world must come to it through Vedanta, as the Atman not as Mr God sitting there. That fellow is long ago dead. God is dead.

Atman as the infinite self, behind this world of duality, is alone real. Thus you get through the three states. This is the importance of the methodology of the three states. You can't get the Atman except through the three states, never. Otherwise you can get theologies. God is sitting there, god is doing this, and god is doing that—like this. Methodology of the three states—*avastha-traya prakriya*, it is the Sanskrit word. *Avastha-traya* means three *avastha*. *Traya* is three, *avastha* means state, *prakriya* is methodology. *Avastha-traya prakriya*—that means you investigate the truth through the methodology of the investigation of the three states. Then you come to the truth of the Atman, infinite non-dual, that is your true nature. You are that, you are that, that knowledge comes. Then we can come down one step lower and live the life of the waking, life of human relationships, nothing will obstruct it. Everything will be fine; you will enjoy life much more than now. The object of your love is not a perishable thing, it is something imperishable. That is more inspiring.

In Swamiji's lecture 'God in Everything' in *Jnana Yoga*, this subject comes. It is an exposition of the *Isha Upanishad*. '*Ishavasyam idam sarvam*; the whole universe is nothing but the Lord.'<sup>58</sup> So we only translate quantum energy into pure consciousness energy field. That is God. Put consciousness instead of quantum energy; you get the same truth, pure consciousness. And they are forced to do it. Pure consciousness is the product of the quantum energy, that is you and me—we are also products of quantum energy and we have consciousness. Something cannot come out of nothing. So, what is in the effect must be in the cause. Effect is consciousness, cause must have consciousness. Many scientists are now thinking on these lines, only they can't openly say. Evolution presupposes involution. A consciousness



comes at the end; it was there in the beginning. Otherwise something coming out of nothing, no science can accept.

‘This manifold [universe] does not exist as identical with *Ātman* nor does it ever stand independent by itself. [It is a mystery.] It is neither separate from Brahman nor is it non-separate. This is the statement of the wise.’ *‘Na-atma-bhavana nanedam na svenapi kathanchana, na prithang-na-aprithang-kinchit iti tatvavido viduh.’*<sup>59</sup> Knowers of truth say so.

Why is, non-duality called the highest bliss? One suffers from misery when one finds differences in the form of multiplicity, *i.e.*, when one finds an object separate from another. For when this manifold of the universe with the entire relative phenomena consisting of *Prāṇa*, etc., imagined in the non-dual *Ātman*, the Ultimate Reality is realised to be identical with the *Ātman*, the Supreme Reality, then alone multiplicity ceases to exist, *i.e.*, *Prāṇa* etc., do not appear to be separate from *Ātman*. It is just like the snake that is imagined (to be separate from the rope) but that does no longer remain as such when its true nature is known with the help of a light to be nothing but the rope. This manifold [universe called] (*Idam*) does never really exist as it appears to be in the forms of *Prāṇa* etc., because it is imaginary just like the snake seen in the place of the rope. Therefore different objects, such as *Prāṇa* etc., do not exist as separate from one another as a buffalo appears to be separate from a horse. The idea of separation being unreal—[that is the most important thing, the idea of separateness is unreal]—there is nothing which exists as separate from an object of the same nature or from other objects (of different nature). The Brāhmaṇas, *i.e.*, the Knowers of Self, know this to be the essence of the Ultimate Reality. Therefore the implication on the verse is that non-duality alone, on account of the absence of any cause that may bring about misery, is verily the (highest) bliss [non-duality]. ...

The idea of separation is unreal. A pot is known only in relation to a cloth or another object. One cannot totally exclude another. Therefore the objects that are perceived to exist, are not mutually independent from the standpoint of Truth. It is the non-dual *Ātman* alone which appears as multiple objects, having relations, through ignorance. ... Duality or multiplicity does never exist, as it cannot be demonstrated (128–9).

This non-duality has been realised by many people. The next verse says: ‘By the wise, who are free from attachment, fear and anger—[three emotions that can distort truth]—who are well versed in the meaning [spirit] of the Vedas, this (*Ātman*) has been verily realised as totally devoid of all imaginations (such as those of *Prāṇa* etc.), free from the illusion of the manifold, and non-dual’ (129). This has been realised. ‘*Vita-raga-bhaya-krodhai munibhih*’. *Muni* means a sage one who is silent or thoughtful. *Vedaparagaih*, those who have gone beyond the Vedas, the actual translation should be, who have gone beyond the Vedas. They have realised the Truth, therefore, they have gone beyond the Vedas. *Para* means crossing a river and going beyond the river; that is, going beyond the Vedas. *Nirvikalpo hyayam drishtah*, this *nirvikalpa* has been realised; this transcendental state, beyond all duality, has been realised. What kind of realisation? *Prapanchopashamo*, where the whole of this dual universe is dissolved. *Advayah*; and it is non-dual. This has been realised. It is not a matter of belief. And the same shloka comes in the Gita, with slight word change, that is all: ‘*Vita-raga-bhayakrodha manmaya mam upashritah*’—those who are devoted to me—‘*bahavo jnanatapasa puta madbhavam-agatah*’.<sup>60</sup> Many people, purified in the fire of jnana, knowledge, ‘*madbhavam-agatah*’—they

have realised oneness with me. Sri Krishna says this in the Gita, the same idea.

The perfect knowledge as described above is thus extolled. [Now you can say in our time, say Ramana Maharishi had the same realisation, that non-dual state.] The sages who are always free from all blemishes such as attachment, fear, spite, anger, etc., who are given to contemplation, who can discriminate between the real and the unreal and who can grasp the essence of the meaning of the Vedas, *i.e.*, who are well versed in Vedānta (*i.e.*, the Upaniṣads) do realise the nature of this *Ātman* which is free from all imaginations and also free from this the illusion of the manifold. This *Ātman* is the total negation of the phenomena of duality and therefore it is non-dual. The intention of the *Śruti* passage is this: The Supreme Self can be realised only by the Saṁnyāsins (men of renunciation) who are free from all blemishes who are enlightened regarding the essence of the Upaniṣads and never others, *i.e.*, those vain logicians whose mind is clouded by passion etc., and who find truth only in their own creeds and opinions. ...

The student fails to realise the Truth if his mind, is at any moment, clouded by passion etc. It is therefore laid in the Vedānta that a student, before aspiring to realise Truth, must be well established in the fourfold pre-requisites, such as, discrimination between the real and the unreal, renunciation of the unreal, total self-control and a strong hankering after realisation. ...

It is only the ignorant person who says that his vision of Reality is alone true. [Wise people will never say so. You can have different visions of Reality.] But to a wise man everything is Brahman. To him anything that may be called non-Brahman is ever non-existent.<sup>61</sup>

‘Therefore knowing the *Ātman* to be such, fix your attention on non-duality’ (131), says the text. ‘*Tasmadevam veditvainaṁ advaite yojayetsmṛitim*’—fix your *smṛiti* or memory, attention, or thought on that Advaita, non-duality, knowing this truth as such. ‘Having realised

non-duality, behave in the world [like an ordinary person], like an insensible object’ (131). If your knowledge is infinite, you can behave in an ordinary manner, you can play with the children, you can do anything. An ordinary life you can lead with an extraordinary realisation, an ordinary life you can lead, that is the meaning of it. *Jadavat*, means a very ignorant person, you can behave like an ignorant person.

As non-duality, on account of its being the negation of all evils, is bliss and fearlessness, therefore knowing it to be such, direct your mind to the realisation of the non-dual *Ātman*. In other words, concentrate your memory on the realisation of non-duality alone. Having known this non-dual Brahman which is free from hunger etc., unborn and directly perceptible as the Self and which transcends all codes of human conduct, *i.e.*, by attaining to the consciousness that ‘I am the Supreme Brahman’, behave with others as one not knowing the Truth (*ibid.*).

Don’t be conscious, ‘I am the Truth’. When you know the truth, you must behave as if you do not know the truth. Otherwise, you don’t know the truth. ‘Don’t you know who I am?’—that attitude should not be there, that is ego. Sri Ramakrishna behaved like an ordinary person. Somebody wanted a flower, he immediately cut one and gave. That man was embarrassed later on, when he knew it was Sri Ramakrishna himself. ‘How does it matter? You wanted something and I gave.’ ‘That is to say, let not others know what you are and what you have become’ (*ibid.*). Don’t proclaim. Your knowledge should not have any showiness about it. That is very important.

‘A wise man does not broadcast his realisation before the world. The sentence may mean that a wise man, on account of his being established in the non-dual *Ātman*, does not see others as separate from him; and therefore he does not assume *consciously* the role of the Knower [of Brahman]’ (*ibid.*). Forsaking the

idea that you are a knower, remain in the world as an ordinary person. Many places they have mentioned it. But outwardly, he is very ordinary. Inwardly, he is simply marvelous. Next verse is very important.

The man of self-restraint should be above all praise—[not to be flattered by anybody saying something]—salutation [beyond all salutations], and [beyond] all rites prescribed by the Smṛti [by the law books] in connection with the departed ancestors. [Shrāddha and other things—he does not need all these.] He should have this body and the *Ātman* as his support and depend upon chances, *i.e.*, he should be satisfied with those things for his physical wants, that chance brings to him.

In Swamiji's 'The Song of the Sannyasin', this idea is expressed there:

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?

The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food,  
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill,  
judge not,

No food or drink can taint the noble Self  
Which knows itself. Like rolling river free  
Thou ever be, Sannyāsin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'<sup>62</sup>

This is one such stanza; many are there.

'What should be his code of conduct in the world? It is thus stated: He should give up all such formalities as praise, salutation, etc., and be free from all desires for external objects. In other words, he should take up the life of a *Paramahansa Samnyāsin*.<sup>63</sup> A free sannyasin, not tied down to rituals and all, is called a *Paramahansa sannyasin*. Our [Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission's] sannyasa is of this Order, we don't carry a stick or this thing, that thing, as some other monks do. We are absolutely free from all these external bondages.

'The *Śruti* also supports this view in such passages as, "Knowing this *Ātman* ..." etc. This

is further approved in such *Smṛti* passages as 'With their consciousness in That (Brahman), their self being That, intent on That, with That for their Supreme Goal ...' (*Gītā*) etc' (ibid.). '*Tad-buddhayas-tadatmanah-tan-nishthah*.'<sup>64</sup> 'The word "*calam*" in the text signifying "changing" indicates the "body" because it changes every moment.'<sup>65</sup> *Chalam* means to move, to change. *Achalam* means not moving. A mountain is called *achalam*. A river is called *chalam*. Mountain does not move except in earthquake. 'The word "*Acalam*" signifying "unchanging" indicates the "Knowledge of Self". He has the (changing) body for his support, when he, for the purpose of such activities as eating etc., forgets the Knowledge of the Self, the (real) support of *Ātman*, unchanging like the *Ākāśa* (ether) and relates himself to egoism' (ibid.).

(To be continued)

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55. See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken, 1907), 353.
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58. *Isha Upanishad*, 1.
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# Vedanta Answers

**Swami Smaranananda**

(Continued from the previous issue)

[Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by young and old alike, over a period of time. This is a collection of such questions and his answers to them—*Editor*.]

**Q**UESTION: How to keep oneself pure in the midst of bad company?

*Answer:* Struggle. Try to avoid bad company. Don't be afraid of criticism or derision.

*Question:* Many people are good but egotistic. How to behave in the company of such people?

*Answer:* Feed such person's ego till she or he realises one's weakness!

*Question:* Why is it more difficult to stay virtuous, pick up good traits or habits than doing the opposite, that is, giving way to bad traits?

*Answer:* Our minds have acquired various kinds of mental impressions in earlier lifetimes. So you will have to identify such thoughts and eliminate them and try to bring in pure thoughts.

*Question:* Is the definition of good company universal? Or can what is good company for one person be not so good for another?

*Answer:* It is how we look upon various values. But, by and large, certain moral principles are universally accepted. For instance, truthfulness, kindness, and compassion. Some values are determined by circumstances. In books like the Mahabharata you can get many examples. That is why Yudhishtira told the Yaksha: '*Dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam*'; dharma's principle

is hidden deeply.' So, follow the path shown by great people.

*Question:* Along with love for God isn't it necessary to have love for humanity, as I see a lot of people who are always visiting temples and performing such rituals, but are unethical and mean to people and humanity?

*Answer:* Love for God and love for humanity are not contradictory, but complementary. Those who parade their so called piety but behave otherwise are hypocrites.

*Question:* Are all the values relative? Or are there some universal values too?

*Answer:* Most of the values are relative, but there are many that are universal. For example, it is said: '*Satyam bruyat, priyam bruyat, ma bruyat satyam apriyam*'; speak the truth, speak that which is sweet, but don't speak the truth which is not sweet.'

*Question:* It was mentioned that we should have 'an ideal and live for that alone'. What kind of ideal are we talking about? Is it synonymous with goals of life? How to get convinced that something is the ideal we should follow?

*Answer:* You might say that having an ideal in life and a goal in life, are synonymous. You will have to think deeply and then decide the goal of your life.

*Question:* I see that often if I don't go by values, I get immediate gains. Then, why should I live with patience and follow values hoping for some benefit in the future, either in this lifetime or the next lifetime?



*Answer:* Gain or loss depends on your choice of what you want to achieve in life. You need not work now for your next lifetime. Make your present life meaningful.

*Question:* Is it always difficult to practise values? If so, why?

*Answer:* It is always difficult to have an ideal in life and follow it strictly. The question is: Do you want an easy-going life or a life of higher values. If it is the latter, then you will have to work for it.

*Question:* Dharma is a blanket concept for all sets of values. Can you please elaborate on it?

*Answer:* Dharma is not a 'blanket concept'. All that is selfish is adharma and all that is selfless is dharma.

*Question:* Some people, like my friend, spend much time in activities like drinking and smoking, and are still better than me in studies. Should I be inspired by him in order to have better time management?

*Answer:* Why should you imitate anyone, friend or otherwise. Learn to think independently, have some goals or ideals in life and follow them fearlessly.

*Question:* I daily make a plan for the day, for example, say I decide that I would study from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. But, at that time, I get an urgent phone call, which I should definitely attend. However, if I attend the call, my whole schedule would be disturbed. What should I do?

*Answer:* Planning for the entire day is good and would help you to concentrate better. But, you cannot avoid urgent phone calls!

*Question:* Does willpower sometimes lead to adamant behaviour? Can we mistake our stubbornness as willpower?

*Answer:* Discriminate between adamant behaviour and willpower. If it is for a good cause, being adamant is sometimes necessary. Otherwise, be flexible.

*Question:* Which one is the best strength: physical, mental, or spiritual strength? What is the best thing to ask from God? If one has spiritual strength does that mean that one will have physical strength too?

*Answer:* Spiritual strength is the best. But to develop it, you need both physical and mental strength. What you want to ask from God depends on what you want in life. But it is better not to ask for worldly things from God.

*Question:* Time is always unidirectional and we absolutely have no control on it. But our mind wanders in all directions. So, what have we to manage: time or our mind?

*Answer:* Time erodes life. So make the best use of the limited period of time given to you. Again, it is for you to decide what you want.

*Question:* I have difficulties with sleep, which is the main problem for me. I find it difficult to wake up in the morning every day and because of this, I feel dull the entire day. Please give me a solution to this problem.

*Answer:* It is a physical problem. Try to do brisk walking in the early morning. If there is a will, there is a way. You can also have a cup of tea as soon as you wake up.

*Question:* Is multitasking good or bad?

*Answer:* If you can do it properly, it is good. It saves time.

*Question:* While managing time, how to know if something is not urgent but important like a long-term spiritual goal and a career goal?

*Answer:* Again, it is for you to decide what is urgent and what is important. Spiritual goals and career goals are opposite paths. So you have to decide what you want.

*Question:* How do we expand our power of concentration and patience?

*Answer:* By practice. Avoid unnecessary or useless things.

(To be continued)

# ***The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life***

**Swami Nityasthananda**

*(Continued from the July 2016 issue)*

**S**WAMI YATISWARANANDA EXPLAINS very graphically how ego makes a person dance feverishly:

When we forget this truth about our real nature and identify ourselves with the ego, we become a plaything of nature. The egocentric individual is like a play ball in the hands of a capricious child. He has no freedom. He is at the mercy of the forces of nature. People who are highly egoistic will find spiritual life very difficult. They mistake their own lower impulses for something very grand and follow them. They do not pause to listen to 'still small voice' of conscience within them. A certain amount of ego reduction is an essential prerequisite for all people who want to embark on the spiritual adventure. What is needed is not just false outer humility but a dignified modesty based on faith in our potential divinity. Without an attitude of self-surrender to the Divine, a spirit of dispassion and a spirit of acceptance of moral correctives, spiritual life becomes very difficult. In other words, we should strive to bring about a total change in our attitude towards ourselves, towards the world, and towards God.<sup>30</sup>

The ego manifests in two ways: in the form of possessiveness and in the form of rejection. The opposite of possessiveness is renunciation and detachment. The ego wants money, position, power, different objects, and persons in its possession for its survival and sustenance. For the same reason it wants food like appreciation. Against these, one has to develop the spirit of detachment, and this is the foundation

of moral and spiritual life. Rejection is another way of ego's assertion. We reject work, situation, persons, and so on, which we do not like. This kind of rejection is not based on the idea of good or bad, but rather based on our likes and dislikes. Greatness lies in doing the work not of our liking with joy and living peacefully in an inimical situation. What greatness is there in living happily in an idyllic situation? Of course, there are persons of inflated egos for whom even the idyllic becomes inimical. Sometimes we justify ourselves for not liking something or somebody with some apparently plausible reasons. The opposite of rejection is the spirit of acceptance. We may renounce many things, but if we do not develop the spirit of accepting what comes to our lot with an attitude of surrender, we may have to experience failures in spiritual life. So it is said that acceptance is a greater sacrifice than renunciation. There are some with an overpowering ego who reject the things offered to them to make a show of their renunciation. Swami Yatiswarananda rightly says: 'It is better to accept with worshipful spirit than to reject egoistically.'

A complaining nature also is the manifestation of ego—a form of rejection. One, who is dissatisfied with work, people, and one's surroundings, goes on complaining against them. We must develop the attitude of acceptance with magnanimity in whatever situation we are placed. Then, God will place us in a better

circumstance. 'God has placed me in this surrounding, let me accept this and do my best'—this must be our attitude. In this regard there is a most instructive incident in Sri Sarada Devi's life.

Sri Sarada Devi was staying in Udbodhan in Calcutta. The monk who was doing the daily worship fell ill, and in his place another monk was sent from the Belur Math to do the worship. However, being accustomed to the serene atmosphere of the Belur Math, this other monk was not happy with the circumstances prevailing in Udbodhan, which was small, crowded, and noisy. In a room adjacent to the shrine where he was worshipping, some devotees were having an animated discussion about the First World War, which was going on then. In another room Radhu was pleading with Sri Sarada for going to Jayarambati. The monk who was doing the worship was unable to continue due to these disturbances. He was discontentedly thinking: 'What a peaceful atmosphere Belur Math has! How to perform the worship in this noisy place?' Then he heard the words of Sri Sarada Devi addressing Radhu: 'Radhi, keep quiet. Wherever God places us, we have to remain there satisfied.' The monk thought that these words were meant for him, and they produced the necessary effect on him. He was able to complete the worship peacefully, without any negative thoughts.<sup>31</sup>

### Feeling of Guilt

When we pursue spiritual practices, some of our weaknesses become prominent. Even small mistakes appear to be big. If the aspirant were to get annoyed and had an altercation with somebody, later she or he would greatly suffer from repentance. Of course, it is better than callousness. Some aspirants, having a rigid timetable for their daily practice, feel pained at heart at not being able to follow it strictly. Some feel full of remorse for not being able to get up early in

the morning. Even the slightest moral lapse may prick the inner conscience greatly. As one progresses spiritually the moral sensitivity increases, and it is a great blessing. Without this sensitivity, one may go on compromising with one's moral shortcomings with scant regard to moral values. One may console oneself in this way: 'When we work in society, all these things are unavoidable. There is no harm in slightly deviating from moral principles to get the work done.' And the mind may even create a new definition of morality! As this continues, we may reach a stage where moral lapses will not affect us at all. If one goes on pricking with the needle at a particular part of the body, in the course of time one won't feel the pain of pricking any more. There is a Sanskrit verse with a warning: '*Papam prajnam nashayati kriyamanam punah punah, nashtaprajnah papameva nityamarabhate narah*'; if a person goes on doing sinful acts, he will lose the moral conscience. When this is lost, he will always act sinfully.<sup>32</sup>

Moral sensitivity is good, and it is also natural to feel hurt within when we err morally or spiritually. However, it is wrong to go on blaming ourselves for that. This only weakens the mind, and as a result we repeat the same mistakes. If it continues for a long time, we lose enthusiasm in spiritual practice, and start thinking sceptically: 'There is no meaning in spiritual life, and nothing can be attained however much one may struggle.' Finally, we settle with a lower ideal and a complacent mood.

(To be continued)

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# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *The Heart of Acharya Ramanuja*

**T**HOUSANDS OF DEVOTEES from various places had thronged to Srirangam to participate in the annual fair. That day was the day of special worship to Garuda. Devotees were enjoying the great

sight of Lord Sri Ranganatha, moving seated on his vehicle Garuda and offered many things like flowers, fruits, betel nut, and camphor to the deity. They were shedding tears of joy and were mentally offering themselves as living oblations at the feet of the Lord, with folded hands.

At the same time, the devotees saw an odd scene there. A handsome well-built young man was holding a big umbrella over a beautiful woman with his left hand and fanning her with his right hand. His attention was fixed on that woman and he was oblivious to the surroundings. He seemed not to bother about what others would think or say about his actions. Many people made fun of this man and woman.

It seemed that Lord Sri Ranganatha wished to show himself to this man, who though having come to the fair was not interested in seeing the Lord.

Having bathed in the Kaveri River, Acharya Ramanuja was returning to his ashrama holding the shoulder of his disciple Dasharathi for support. He saw this



IMAGE: RAMAKRISHNA MATH, HYDERABAD



young man and told one of his disciples: 'Child! You go to that young man and bring him to me.' Accordingly the disciple went to the young man, and called him several times. Only then did the young man turn to the disciple. The young man came to his senses as one woken up from deep sleep. He saluted the disciple with folded hands and asked humbly: 'Sir, what can I do for you?' The disciple replied: 'There stands the king of ascetics, who wants to talk to you. Can you come with me for some time?' Hearing this, the young man, with no desire to leave the young woman, reluctantly went with the disciple.

On approaching Acharya Ramanuja, the young man prostrated at his feet and stood silently. Acharya Ramanuja asked him: 'What joy do you find in that woman? Why are you acting without any sense of honour, to the ridicule of all?'

The young man replied: 'Even though there are many beautiful things in this world, this woman's beauty has attracted me, and I have become like an insane person, and have lost control of myself.'

Acharya Ramanuja asked: 'Is she your wife?'

The young man replied: 'No, sir. She is not my wife. Still, I have decided that I would not love anyone other than her.'

Acharya Ramanuja: 'What is your name?'

The young man replied: 'My name is Dhanurdasa. I am from the city of Nisula. I am a wrestler and Heramba is the young woman's name.'

Acharya Ramanuja asked: 'O Dhanurdasa, if I show you a greater beauty than Heramba, will you love that beauty?'

The young man replied: 'Sir, if you can show a greater beauty than this woman, I would not hesitate to surrender myself at the feet of that greater beauty.'

Acharya Ramanuja said: 'If that be so, come and meet me today evening.'

That evening Dhanurdasa met Acharya Ramanuja, who took him to the temple of Sri Ranganatha. When the camphor lights were being waved before the Lord's image, Dhanurdasa was struck by the unsurpassed beauty of Sri Ranganatha and all his attraction for Heramba disappeared. He lost all outward consciousness in a divine fervour.

When Dhanurdasa became conscious of the external surroundings, he bowed down and held the feet of Acharya Ramanuja and beseeched: 'You are an ocean of compassion! You are my lord! You are my guru! Because of your divine grace, I could get the great fortune of having a vision of the Lord. I would be enslaved to you forever, for having given me this great vision, which even gods hanker for. Till now, I was living in my small well, thinking it as the entire world, forgetting the ocean outside. I was just like the owl, which thinks of the glow-worm as the greatest light, not knowing about the sun. Please bless me that I am always graced by you, who have opened my eyes.'

Acharya Ramanuja lifted up and embraced Dhanurdasa, the effects of whose bad actions of many lifetimes had been wiped out because of the Lord's vision he had by the guru's grace.

Heramba was born into a family of courtesans, yet she lived with Dhanurdasa, considering him her husband. She was happy to hear that he had got the Lord's vision. By Acharya Ramanuja's grace, she too gave up sense pleasures and took refuge in him. By his grace, they become an ideal devotee-couple, completely free from feelings of lust and delusion. They moved from the city of Nisula and started living near their guru. Their devotion to the guru, straightforwardness, truthfulness, dispassion, love, and humility attracted many people to them.

*(To be continued)*

# REVIEWS

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publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Bengal Partition Stories:  
An Unclosed Chapter**  
Edited by Bashabi Fraser

Anthem Press, 75–6 Blackfriars Road,  
London SE1 8HA, UK. [www.anthem-press.com](http://www.anthem-press.com). 2008. 640 pp. PB. \$35.00.  
ISBN 9781843312994.

It is seldom recognised that Bengal's partition falls within both the secular and the theological problems of evil:

The Bengal [partition] can ... be viewed as part of a graver, greater global continuum of genocides, pogroms, rape and abduction, mutilation of human beings and the destruction of property, as communities perceive fresh fault lines of demarcation and resort to violence to create unreal monolithic communities which are not realizable as has been proved in spite of Hitler's planned holocaust ... the Bengal story ... [resonates] with Northern Ireland, Israel, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Germany, Rwanda, Burundi, Chechnya, East Timor, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq and Sudan, in an unending list of afflicted communities which have fallen apart (5–6).

While this reviewer plods on his word processor in the hinterlands of West Bengal, the South Sudanese people are killing each other once again; Turkey's latest military coup is nearly tearing that nation apart and the ISIS are preying on Europe; trying to rift the United Kingdom and Europe itself. In the words of W B Yeats: 'The centre cannot hold ... Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world/ The blood-dimmed tide is loosed' (*The Second Coming*, 1919). Indeed, everywhere we ken, centres can no longer hold; the Aristotelian *polis* is under unprecedented attack and Bashabi Fraser is the only thinker amongst those concerned with the annihilation of human autonomy, who has been able to connect the partition event with incidences of global violence. Fraser's book should be seen as part of the

cultural work begun by anthropologists like Alexander Laban Hinton (see Alexander Laban Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* (Oakland: University of California, 2002)).

Historians and political scientists till date have seen the Bengal partition as being the result of a Hegelian and thus materially propelled dialectic's logical conclusion. Fraser traces this dialectic in her 'Introduction' well. Her analysis of the Radcliffe Award (4) is proof that she has not disregarded established Enlightenment-style historiography made popular by John Trevelyan (1903–86). Had she rejected established modes of historical research then her 'Introduction' would have little to recommend itself since tradition is never to be discarded for individual improvements (see T S Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in T S Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1921)). Fraser's genius lies in then adding: 'What is unique about the Bengal Partition is that ... the influx of refugees across the Bengal border has never stopped, to date' (5). This is history catching up with ground reality. This is the sort of realist historiography that can counter the xenophobic historiography practised by Niall Ferguson (b. 1964). Fergusson in two of his pathetic histories, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004) and *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin, 2012), spews venomous fodder, which will find takers in the likes of disturbed and egotistical politicians. Fraser's 'Introduction' in its advocacy of Hospitality—*vide* Emmanuel Lévinas—is the only work by an Indian writer which can demolish Fergusson's rhetoric of division and racist harangue. While the Bengali Fraser will be remembered by Scotland, where she lives, as a pacifist; Fergusson, who is originally Scottish, will be remembered by posterity as a white supremacist who like Mark Anthony only succeeded in rabble-rousing. Fraser is a syncretic thinker (21–2), while Fergusson is only a demagogue.

This reviewer called up and videoconferenced with historians, and searched through internet databases and found out that till the publication of this review, none but Bashabi Fraser has been able to connect decisively the evil that befell Bengal with global events. The Bengal partition is not merely a Hegelian inevitable event but part of a cycle of events that will recur unless we heed Fraser's scholarship. And in one masterstroke Fraser has established her book as the *sine qua non* of partition history. She has allowed individual stories to tell their tales. This is the single most important factor that makes this book truly interdisciplinary and makes it transcend Marxist historiography, which ultimately becoming boring and repetitive, will soon vanish from our collective memories. Ranajit Guha will be remembered as long as some of his acolytes are alive. Guha does not stand a chance against the magisterial Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) and Eric Hobsbawm (1917–2012). Stories, like the story of the crazy king Macbeth are real but strangely, not true. As Aristotle said in his *The Poetics*, literature has a timeless and universal quality which dry sweeping or, in the case of Ranajit Guha and his attendants, microscopic, historical accounts can never provide. When we read Atin Bandopadhyay's story 'Infidel' in this book, translated by Sarika Chaudhuri (165–76), we immediately know the nuances of heartbreak. The Bengal partition is all about heartbreaks and this is where Fraser scores over historians she quotes, like Sugato Bose and Sumit Sarkar in endnotes 2 and 18 to her 'Introduction'. Studying both Bose and Sarkar is a tedious affair. Reading the insults of Fergusson, mentioned above, makes one marvel at the high IQ of a divisive professor, but reading partition stories make the experience of catastrophe real for us in the *here and the now*. History comes alive not in the hands of Sarkar, Bose, or Fergusson, but in the stories anthologised here. Fraser's portrayal of the uprooted Bengali is more representative of Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* than Agamben could ever explain in his own philosophy books. It is the emotional fallout of the partition event that Fraser's selection of stories brings out. While Niall Fergusson's concept of the human person is of an intellectual and arrogant Nietzschean *Übermensch*, Fraser's construction of the human person is as one truly is: broken, abject, and

struggling for self-actualisation—the term is used here as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow have used it—in an inhuman world where Indifferent-Hap (see Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*, 1903) forces integrated human beings feel like bare-forked animals (see William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act 3, Scene 4). What began as the secular problem of evil now with the addition of stories qua the Aristotelian view of literature becomes the theological problem of evil. The realm of literature is the realm of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* (1797). Storytellers have on *honey-dew fed* and therefore their utterances are reflections of the scent of God (see Beryl Singleton Bissell, *The Scent of God: A Memoir* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2006)).

Fraser herself foregrounds theology:

I see the shadows on the prowl  
I feel the fog of hatred rise ...  
And mindless violence does its worst;  
The swarming maggots crawl in to claim  
Bodies, loot—in God's own name ... (91)

Fraser tacitly admits to the presence of God, the trace to God, and therefore by implication makes her book a valuable contribution to theodicy. And the *telos* of all theodicy is the sovereignty of the good and liberal humanism. Fraser's choice of stories shows the resilience of the human spirit against the rise of the *crimson tide*. Manik Bandopadhyay's 'The Ledger', translated by Sheila Sengupta (145–50), Dibyendu Palit's 'Hindu', translated by Sarika Chaudhuri (227–38,) and Selina Hossain's 'Looking Back' translated by Bashabi Fraser (387–97,) speak of '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*; the world is one family'. Cosmopolitanism as praxis and theological contingency is illustrated in this anthology. 'Looking Back' is all the more relevant today with the rise of extremist killings. Fanaticism, so abhorrent to Sri Ramakrishna, is re-scrutinised in this book and Fraser through her own scholarship and translation, annihilates the Medusa of dogma. 'Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter' is the ideological antidote to any form of antinomian rabid orthodoxy.

Imperial cartography played a huge role in subduing nations and Fraser has done what other scholars in this field have not. This book has valuable maps that will help students and research scholars (85–8). The maps are uncluttered; the map

of undivided Bengal (87) is cartography at its best.

There is only one lacuna in this anthology. The editor has been influenced by P Lal's flawed understanding of translation though she is superior to Lal in the act of translating as will be shown in a moment. Lal came to believe in the primacy of the imagination over authenticity while he painstakingly botched up the Mahabharata, which he tried to translate over the years. Unlike Umberto Eco, Lal felt the need to invent, and not coin, new words when his own vocabulary proved inadequate for that tough task. Contrast him to Father Mignon SJ, still alive, who has just finished translating the Holy Bible into regular Bengali. Fraser is in the line of Mignon SJ, rather than Lal. Therefore, Fraser's translators are immaculate in their grasps of both Bengali and English and yet Fraser unnecessarily speaks of the pitfalls of translation (57–9). But here too she is able to hold her own since she comments on the narratorial exigencies of Bengali literature vis-a-vis English narrative techniques (59). Her own 'Looking Back' proves that Fraser needlessly worries about translation. Readers are mercifully spared 'transcreations' in this anthology.

This reviewer is surprised that generations of Indian students read Padmini Mongia (see her dated *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1996)), Meenakshi Mukherjee, more ancient than Mongia, and Bill Ashcroft to understand India's colonial history and the partition event. Yet our syllabi framers somehow forget to recommend Fraser while they effusively praise Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, and Aijaz Ahmed to students of English literature and history. It may be that Fraser's humanism and non-partisanship scares hate-peddlers and atheists. It also may be that her poetry scares hardened academic hearts and prevents her book from being kept in Indian, and of course, other South Asian libraries. Poets have been known to cause anxiety since Plato.

Any student or scholar wanting to understand Bengal partition and the *whatness* of the colonial situation should read this book. The best is kept for the last: Fraser's endnotes are the single most important reason why she is on a par with Richard Slotkin (b. 1942) and cause enough for us to trash the Modern Language Association's inane rules, especially regarding endnotes. What Slotkin

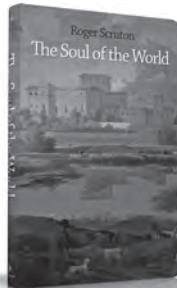
has done for American culture aka Exceptionalism, Fraser has done for India and Bangladesh. Mushirul Hasan's first line in his foreword to this anthology can only be appreciated after finishing the book: 'Literature has emerged as an alternate archive of the times' (xiii). This book makes Fraser equal to Ismat Chughtai (1915–91) (see Ismat Chughtai, *A Life in Words: Memoirs* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2013)).

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Psychoanalyst

Assistant Professor of English

Ramananda College, Bishnupur



### **The Soul of the World**

Roger Scruton

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. [www.press.princeton.edu](http://www.press.princeton.edu). 2016. 216 pp. PB. \$17.95. ISBN 9780691169286.

Roger Scruton is a man fixed in his views. That music is not music for him if it is not sacred: he condemns 'the depravities of popular musical culture' (152); as he condemns so many others, like evolutionary psychologists, in this treat of a book. But what is wrong in reclaiming the domain of the intellectual to those who are intellectuals? Jonathan Swift condemned fools; as did Shakespeare before Swift and Horace in his *Odes* much before Shakespeare. In a world where Masters' degrees are for sale, it is natural that Scruton will be dismissed as incomprehensible and orthodox. 'The Sacred Space of Music' (140–74) is the best piece of writing on music today except for the references to music that one finds in the novels of Haruki Murakami.

In his last chapter, 'Seeking God' (175–98), Scruton urges us to 'move on from [René] Girard's emphasis on sacrificial violence' (182) to 'another order of things, which reveals itself in moments of emergency, when we confront the truth that we are suspended between being and nothingness' (185). In Stephen King's *Desperation* (1996) God keeps his covenant through the little boy David's conscious search for God through prayer. This reviewer recommends that Freudian analyses of cult horror fiction give way to the paradigms constructed by the likes of Scruton; because while Scruton does not bow to non-transcendent, structuralist pressures,



Freud rejects all metaphysics. Are we not tired of having everything deconstructed without ever understanding what Logos is? Who amongst us will say that our lives are like onions with no inner meaning and there is an eternal slippage of meaning? Scruton knows and proves that the early and popular Derrida and his acolytes are wrong—we need more of Scruton than of *Of Grammatology*.

Unlike what is found on the Internet about this book and Scruton generally; Scruton is a theologian of the caliber of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Jürgen Moltmann. Scruton is a theologian since he speaks of standing ‘on the edge of a mystery’ which is the God of the Covenant (185). Philosophers know it all; only a theologian is moved by music, God and ‘Our relation to God ... as an intentional ... relation’ (188). Scruton mercifully avoids being plebeian without being difficult. Dense writers are only dense.

Arthur Schopenhauer haunts this book. But Scruton has not explicitly mentioned him anywhere.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Bhattacharyya’s aesthetic ideas (159–75), we have an explication of *feeling of feelings*, emotions fluctuating between the individual mind and the sublation of that mind into the universal mind (171).

If one attends seminars in the humanities, one hears of Derrida, Lacan, Alain Badiou, and of the subaltern studies’ group *ad nauseam*. It is as if Indian philosophers have no place in learned discussions. Of late one hears of Giorgio Agamben and Martha Nussbaum. Nary a word on Indian thinkers who might be used to foreground disciplines as diverse as literature, political science, and film studies. It is akin to blasphemy to have no reference to American and Continental philosophers in an international symposium, say on, immigration or the rise of religious extremism. Yet Kalidas Bhattacharyya’s understanding of *Anekanta Vada* is unknown to most. Western savants do not care to understand that cosmopolitanism is a Hindu concept; neither a Jain concept nor is it a Greek concept as is mistakenly taught in classrooms worldwide and mentioned on the Internet. Tara Chatterjee’s *Anekanta Vedanta* (112–24) should be read by English literature scholars first since they are the ones who hardly know that they are mistaking as Western, concepts which Indian doyens of modern philosophy have already written on. How many Masters’ and post-Masters’ English-literature students know of Kalidas Bhattacharyya’s monograph on Indian cosmopolitanism published in 1982?

It is the sad state of Indian studies—literary and philosophical—today that while Western scholars acknowledge the contributions of the likes of Kalidas Bhattacharyya and Bimal Krishna Matilal, Indian academics are ignorant of them. Madhumita Chattopadhyay has done a great service to Indian and world letters by editing this volume. Hopefully, Indian lovers of all things First World will now wake up and refer students to this book. It is time that we stop grinding Anita Desai and Manju Kapur under the millstones of Julia Kristeva and bell hooks in the name of appearing avant garde. Kalidas Bhattacharyya can provide the requisite hermeneutical lens; if only one has the sense to read him. May be, in the future the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Jadavpur University, will bring out a similar volume on Bimal Krishna Matilal.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay



### Alternative Standpoints:

#### A Tribute to

#### Kalidas Bhattacharyya

Edited by

Madhumita Chattopadhyay

D K Printworld (P) Ltd, ‘Vedasi’,  
F-395, Sudarshan Park Near  
ESI Hospital New Delhi 110015 .  
[www.dkprintworld.com](http://www.dkprintworld.com). 2015. xxii +  
258 pp. PB. ₹ 900. ISBN 9788192570297.

Frank Kermode gestured towards the sense of an ending. That which has a finality is neither art nor philosophy. The genius of Maitreyee Datta is to end her analysis of—Kalidas Bhattacharyya’s understanding of self within Yogachara Buddhist concepts of self (140–51) in this *festschrift* with ‘Perhaps ... I feel’ (151). The subjectivity involved in *doing* philosophy is best illustrated by this admission to interiority; the phenomenological turn which certainly influences Datta and of course, Kalidas Bhattacharyya. Husserl is everywhere in this volume, but is only mentioned twice in the book, other than once in the index. For example, in Goutam Biswas’s chapter on Kalidas



### **The Tagore-Geddes Correspondence**

Compiled and edited by  
Bashabi Fraser

Visva-Bharati, 6 Acharya Jagadish-chandra Bose Road, Kolkata 700017.  
[www.vbgu.in](http://www.vbgu.in). 2004. xiv + 173 pp. PB.  
₹100. ISBN 8175223731.

**T**his book is about the coming together of two great polyglot geniuses who were also autodidacts, who were concerned with the other's nation, but though glorified in their own countries, remain relatively unknown in the nations of the other. Their friendship is, in many ways, a representation of the friendship of the East and the West, albeit more of a conceptual exchange than cultural. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were witness to the interchange of ideas among the East and West at various levels and at an enormous magnitude. Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes are great representatives of that era. Their interaction led to an influence on their works, even outside of the topics they discussed. Geddes influenced Tagore's writings and Tagore influenced Geddes's architecture, both subjects, which they did not discuss among them, at least not in depth.

Bashabi Fraser brings out in all beauty, the Tagore-Geddes relationship, through their correspondence in this slim but significant volume. Her contribution helps us get a glimpse of these geniuses, who otherwise would have remained, like many other geniuses, 'misunderstood' and 'lonely souls' (4).

It is interesting to note that one of the first Geddes's introductions to Eastern thought was through his meeting with Swami Vivekananda in 1893. Later, Swamiji's disciple Sister Nivedita worked as the secretary to Geddes in the Parliament of Religions at Paris in 1900. Impressed by the vast abilities and understanding of Geddes, she tried to learn as much as she could from this Scottish polymath. Her focus was to integrate local elements of knowledge into Indian university curricula. Adapting the local wisdom being an innovation of Geddes, he charted detailed frameworks of Indian sociology for being translated into action by Nivedita. He drew parallels to his Outlook

Tower and also explained his ideas of 'Synthesis'. Understandably, Nivedita was enthralled by these inputs. However, the unfortunate souring of their relationship and later, the untimely death of Nivedita, left these ideas unworked. Her attempts to create an indigenous structure for studies on Indian sociology, also did not gain currency.

This is one of those numerous instances of an East-West dialogue going unheeded, such neglect not restricted to the other side. Tagore's dream of reinventing education and its modes, which was given shape in the form of a university in Visva-Bharati, has become the hotbed of political turmoil and the play of vested interests. Fraser laments that this national university 'never really mirrors Tagore's ideal of seeing the interplay of thought between itinerant gurus from both the East and the West, meeting and saying there for short periods' (32-3). The very fact that this book has not gained its deserved visibility even after more than a decade of its publication shows how apathetic we have become to the interchange of ideas that Tagore, and earlier, Swamiji had envisioned.

The extent of the collaboration that Geddes and Tagore had in mind can be gauged by these lines from one of Geddes's letters: 'You wish contact with Western science; and we have it here, at this University [Scotts College, Montpellier] as well among ourselves. More living science, history too, and geography as well, and one of the best traditions and atmospheres in medicine, and even in law!' (140-1).

What with our obsession with the playthings that present-day gadgets have become, why is it that we fail to find constructive and creative uses for them? Why is it that Indian institutions supposed to be centres of higher learning and seats of vibrant interplay of thought have instead become decrepit reminders of stale bureaucracy and inertia? The likes of Fraser need to be noticed and encouraged to highlight, extract, and enliven such seeds of East-West dialogue that remain lost in many 'heritage' organisations. This book should be read by anyone who aligns oneself with the tradition of learning seen in the Rig Veda: 'Let noble thoughts come from all directions' (1.89.1).

*Editor*

Prabuddha Bharata

# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

## ***A None's Story:***

***Searching for Meaning Inside Christianity,  
Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam***

Corinna Nicolaou

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York, NY 10023. 2016. xiv +289 pp. \$35. HB. ISBN 9780231173940.

I'M A 'NONE'. When I say this out loud, people think I've said 'I'm nun', as in a habited woman who lives in a convent, which I find both funny and a little ironic because I'm actually sort of the opposite of that kind of nun. I'm one of the Americans who on recent national surveys claim no religious affiliations, who answer 'none' to the question about what religion they are (this is why pollsters call us 'Nones').

I have not had the opportunity to declare such an affiliation on an official document as I have yet to be randomly selected to participate in one of the few national surveys that measures religious attitudes. One such study is the American Religious Identification Survey, which has been conducted periodically since 1990, allowing for scientific monitoring of change over time. Because the U.S. Bureau of the Census is constitutionally prohibited from inquiring about religion, it relies on these results and has included them in the Statistical Abstract of the United States since 2003. If you are selected to participate in the study, a pollster will ask you a slew of questions by telephone. For example, on the 'religious screener' portion of the form, you will be asked, 'What is your religion, if any?' The list of possible responses is exhaustive and includes such options as Rastafarian, Wiccan, and Druid. Way down at the bottom (option number 95) is

the one I would select: 'No Religion / None'. Apparently this answer has become one of the most popular in recent years.

According to the Pew Research Center, the ranks of the Nones have ballooned in recent years, making 'no religious affiliation' the fastest-growing category among religious affiliations. Between 1972 and 1989, about 7 percent of Americans identified as having no formal religious affiliation. However, between 1990 and 2012, that figure jumped to 19.6 percent. Among people under age thirty, just over 30 percent say they have no religious affiliation. At the same time, the percentage of the U.S. population that identifies as Christian has experienced a steady decline, and other faiths have had modest growth at best.

One might assume that Nones are atheists, a categorization known for its denial of deity; for the most part, this is not the case. Growth in atheism has not kept pace with the rise in Nones. Less than 15 percent of the country's 46 million unaffiliated adults go on to claim atheism as their viewpoint of choice, a number that has remained relatively stable over the last decade or so.

In fact, most Nones agree that churches and other religious institutions benefit society and that they personally feel religious or spiritual in some way. A special study by the Pew Research



Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, conducted with the PBS television program *Religion and Ethics News Weekly* in 2012, found that 68 percent of Nones say they believe in God. More than a third (37 percent) classify what they feel as 'spiritual', and over half (58 percent) say they often feel a deep connection with nature and the earth. Perhaps most surprising is the number of Nones who report communing with a higher power: 41 percent say they pray at least once a month, and half of this group says they pray every single day.

So what is causing this seemingly sudden religious disassociation among a large subset of the American population? The only explanation that seems to make sense, the author suggests, is political. The one characteristic many Nones share is that they lean left politically.


Putnam and Campbell state that the rise in Nones appears to be tied to the perception that religion and conservative politics go hand in hand—and I have to admit, this sounds about right to me. On a national survey, Nones report disassociating from organized religion at least in part because 'they think of religious people as hypocritical, judgmental, or insincere'. Many also report feeling that religious organizations 'focus too much on rules and not enough on spirituality'. In general, Nones believe that religious leaders do not treat certain social issues, particularly those regarding sexuality, with enough acceptance. We can't wrap our heads around a God who is more concerned with our private parts than with the content of our hearts.

But by disassociating with religion, are Nones missing out? I'm told religion has helped people be happier, kinder, more inclined to see 'the big picture'. It's been credited with keeping believers grounded, reducing anxiety and the compulsions that often lead to self-destructive behaviour. In times of great difficulty, it may be the only thing

that keeps a person afloat until things get better. Religion is touted as a doorway to the eternal, helping us understand our role in the cosmos.

I wished to know what the faithful knew, but I was scared.

Eventually I had this thought: What if I conquered my fear and walked into those places of worship and attended the services and maybe even communicated with believers? What divine wisdom would I gather along the way? What, if anything, would I get from these experiences that I'm not getting by staying firmly planted in a secular world? I was also interested in how religions are practiced in the United States and what this says about our country and the citizens who inhabit it. The account presented here wasn't initially conceived as a 'journey', but it picked up steam along the way. Early on I happened on a quote by Max Müller, a German-born scholar who lived in the 1900s. He advocated for the study of comparative religion, famously stating: 'He who knows one, knows none'. I took his words to heart.

Because I've come to see the importance of starting any journey right where you are, I began my explorations near my current home, which is a relatively small town in the Pacific Northwest. I also returned to the places I'd lived in the past—California, Texas, and Washington, D.C.—for additional experiences and to further enrich my understanding of the various religions. I've selected these cities in part because, for the particular faith I explore there, they offer a healthy range of options. More importantly, each played a part in my 'None story': from my introduction to Christianity in Texas, my first encounters with Judaism in Los Angeles, and the full embrace of my Noneness as a college student in the San Francisco Bay Area to the aching that started to tug on my heart as a young professional in Washington, D.C., which led me to the Pacific Northwest and, ultimately, on this path. 



# REPORTS

## ***New Math Centre***

At the request of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Kayamkulam, whose immovable properties already belonged to Ramakrishna Math, Belur, the possession and management of the Ashrama has been taken over by us. The address of this new centre is 'Ramakrishna Math, P.O. Kayamkulam, Dist. Alappuzha, Kerala 690502', phone: 0479-2445891 and email: <kayamkulam@rkmm.org>.

## ***New Mission Sub-Centre***

A sub-centre of **Delhi** Ashrama has been started at **Vasant Vihar**, Delhi. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Kutir, F-4/13, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110057'. Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the sub-centre on 11 April 2016.

## ***Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversaries of the Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna***

**Delhi** centre held public meetings on 10 and 26 April in commemoration of the 150th birth anniversaries of Swamis **Akhandanandaji** Maharaj and **Saradanandaji** Maharaj respectively.

## ***Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita***

**Chennai Vidyapith** held a special programme comprising speeches and cultural programmes on 5 April and inaugurated the renovated lecture hall of the college, now named 'Sister Nivedita Hall'.

**Swamiji's Ancestral House** held three lectures on 15, 20, and 21 April, which were attended altogether by 850 people.

## ***News of Branch Centres***

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi Ranchi** held two farmers' fairs and awareness programmes on 30 March and 5 April. Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the renovated exhibition on Swami Vivekananda at the Ashrama on 21 April. The Government of Jharkhand has started a Kisan Single Window Centre at Getalsud farm of the Ashrama. Sri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, declared open the centre at a function held in Jamshedpur on 24 April.

Dr Krishan Kant Paul, Governor of Uttarakhand, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh** centre on 3 April and participated in its annual celebration.

Sri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport, Highways, and Shipping, Government of India, visited **Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur** on 3 April.

Sri O Ibobi Singh, chief minister of Manipur, inaugurated the primary school of **Ramakrishna Mission, Imphal** at its Uripok campus on 14 April.

Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the renovated kitchen-cum-dining-hall at **Ramakrishna Mission, Indore** on 20 April.

Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Tripura, inaugurated the new CT scan facility at **Vrindaban** hospital on 23 April.

A fibreglass bust of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled on 27 April at Thompson House, Almora, where Swamiji had stayed for several days in 1898. The bust has been installed by the joint efforts of the Directorate of Culture of Uttarakhand Government, District Administration of Almora, and **Ramakrishna Kutir, Almora** to commemorate Swamiji's several visits to Almora.

Sri V Shanmuganathan, Governor of Meghalaya, visited Vivekananda Cultural Centre, **Shillong**, on 27 April and participated in the programme held by the **Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong** to observe the 115th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Shillong. About 2,000 youths took part in the programme.

Three of our colleges in West Bengal, namely Residential College, **Narendrapur**, Vivekananda Centenary College, **Rahara**, and Sikshana-mandira, **Saradapitha**, have been conferred the status of 'Colleges with Potential for Excellence (CPE)' by the University Grants Commission. Under the CPE scheme, funds will be provided to the colleges to improve and strengthen their infrastructure to achieve higher academic standards.

**Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai** and **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur** received the 'Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST) and Solar Cooker Excellence Award 2016' from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India, for effectively using CST system for cooking purpose in their institutions. Sri Piyush Goyal, Minister of State for Power, Coal, and New and Renewable Energy, handed over the awards comprising certificates and plaques at a function held in New Delhi on 29 April.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka** (Bangladesh) launched *Prabodhan*, a quarterly Bengali magazine by Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 10 April.

### Relief

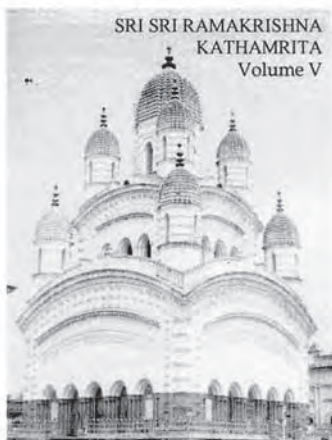
**Winter Relief:** The following centres distributed various items among poor and needy people: (a) **Darjeeling:** 845 shawls on 3 April. (b) **Gol Park (Kolkata):** 350 blankets from 23 October to 15 January. (c) **Mysuru:** 993 jackets and 2,194 sweatshirts from 16 February to 28 March. (d) **Narottam Nagar:** 306 sweaters, 125 jackets, and 147 sweatshirts from 21 March to 9 April.

**Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu:** (i) On 14 April, **Chennai Math** handed over 22 newly constructed low-cost houses to 22 poor fishermen families of Pattinapakkam area in Chennai who had lost their huts in November 2015 floods. (ii) **Chennai Students' Home** handed over 19 newly built low-cost houses and 11 additional toilets to flood-affected Irula tribal families of Thathaimanji village in Thiruvallur district on 6 April. On the same day the centre also distributed 31 cots and an equal number of racks, stoves, utensil sets (each set containing 2 cooking vessels, 4 plates, 4 tumblers, and 2 spoons) and blankets among 31 poor families.

**Economic Rehabilitation: Assam: Guwahati** centre distributed 6 sewing machines among poor and needy people on 20 March.

**Drought Relief:** In the wake of a drought-like situation in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana, the following centres conducted relief operations mentioned below: (a) **Karnataka: Belagavi** (Belgaum) centre distributed 32.58 lakh litres of drinking water among 77,200 people of 15 villages in Belagavi district from 28 April to 28 May. **Ponnampet** centre distributed 30,000 litres of drinking water among 110 families of Haligattu Deva colony and Seetha colony in Kodagu district in the month of May. (b) **Maharashtra: Aurangabad** centre distributed 13.75 lakh litres of drinking water among 17,990 people of 20 villages in Aurangabad district from 1 to 23 May. **Pune** centre distributed 25.62 lakh litres of drinking water among 17,695 people of 7 villages in Satara and Ahmednagar districts from 26 April to 19 May. (c) **Telangana: Hyderabad** centre distributed 22.74 lakh litres of drinking water among 14,598 families of 12 villages in Ranga Reddy, Warangal, and Karimnagar districts and in Adilabad town from 28 April to 25 May. Further, the centre excavated a well on a site about 1.5 km away from Adalpur village in Ranga Reddy district. Water is being pumped from this well and supplied to the village.

**Storm Relief: Assam:** In the wake of a severe storm, **Silchar** centre supplied 863 tin sheets among 111 families of 17 villages in Barak Valley from 5 to 13 May.



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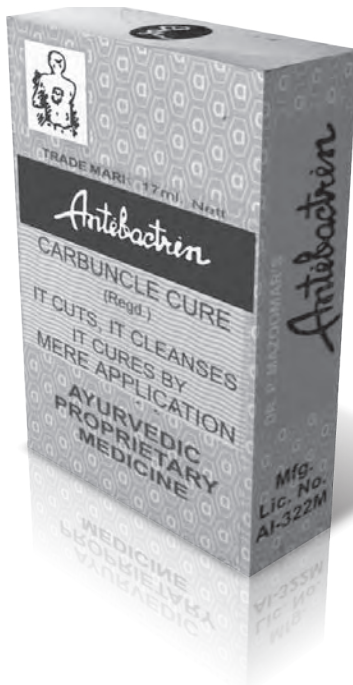
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## RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA

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### The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The day of inauguration has been fixed tentatively as 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Sunday.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 15 Crores. So far Rs. 11.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 04.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

**We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.**

**We value your help and co-operation immensely.**

Yours in the service of the Lord,

(Swami Vishnupadananda)  
Secretary

Proposed Universal Temple of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna



Model of the Proposed New Temple

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**Length:** 156 ft. **Breadth:** 076 ft. **Height:** 100 ft.

Temple Construction Area : 18000 Sq.ft.

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The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone  
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To start with, we propose to have the Monk's quarters, rooms for Welfare and social activities, office building, Library and free reading room, guests room and a Universal Temple of Sri Ramakrishna. The entire infrastructure has to be re-constructed. By the grace of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna, the plans for rebuilding the whole centre has been prepared.

The estimated expenditure for this project is Rupees 5 Crores.

We invite every one of you the noble-hearted people, specially the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, to come forward with their generous donations to enable us to erect this abode for Sri Ramakrishna and serve humanity.

Every one, who participates in this seva-yajna (service-sacrifice) will be a sure recipient of the blessings of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

Yours in the Lord,  
Swami Virabhadrananda, Adhyaksha



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In the covering letter mention that it is a donation for Haripad Centre building fund. And inform all the details of the donation to e-mail: srkmathharipad@gmail.com, viveka.vira@gmail.com

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*We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.*

*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

— Swami Vivekananda





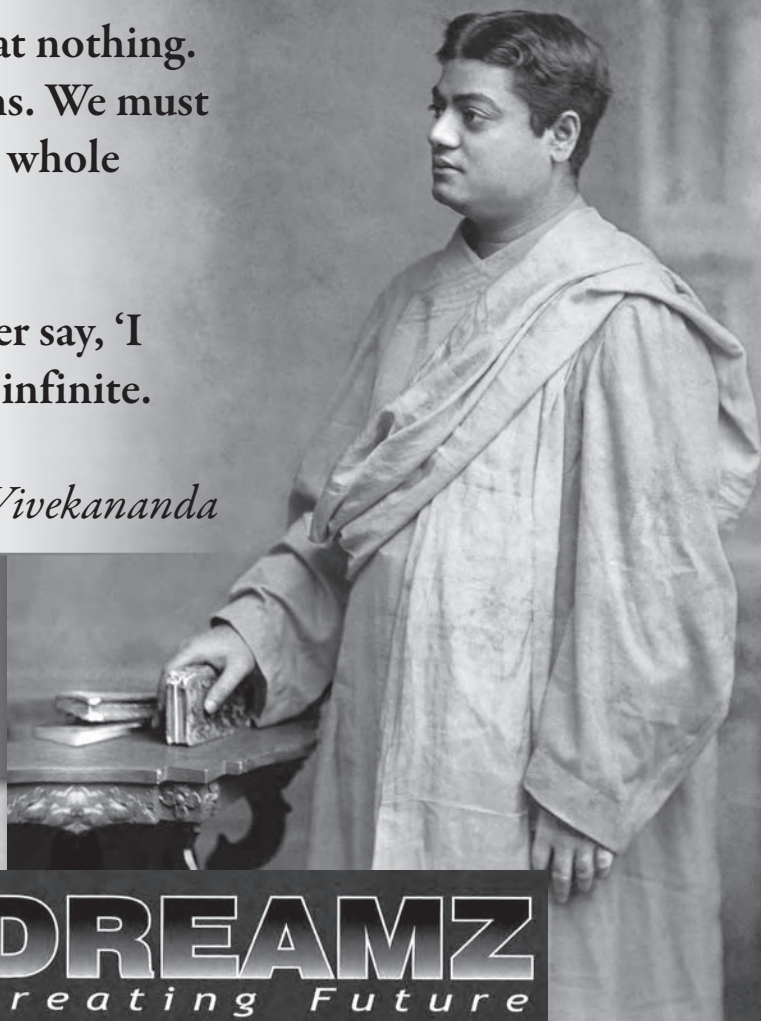
Each soul is potentially divine.  
The goal is to manifest this  
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is  
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.  
You will be like lions. We must  
rouse India and the whole  
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I  
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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The best guide in life is strength.  
In religion, as in all other matters,  
discard everything that weakens  
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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**Managing Editor:** Swami Tattwavidananda. **Editor:** Swami Narasimhananda. **Printed by:** Swami Vibhatmananda at Gipidi Box Co., 3B Chatu Babu Lane, Kolkata 700 014 and published by him for Advaita Ashrama (Mayavati) from Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, on 1 September 2016.